Textual Historicity in the National Library of Wales' Fifteenth Century Peniarth MS 481D: *Disticha Catonis*, *Historia de preliis*, and *Historia Trium Regum*

S. McKeon

Aberystwyth University

Q395 Literary Studies (Medieval and Renaissance Writing) MA

2nd September 2011

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth for giving me access to Peniarth MS 481D for my research, and also for their time with dealing with my inquiries. I would also like to thank my two supervisors: Professor Diane Watt (now of the University of Surrey), who kindly encouraged me to take on this project for my dissertation, and secondly, Dr Elisabeth Salter who kindly took over from Professor Watt and gave me great advice, room to discuss my ideas, and was more than generous with her time, support, and interest. I was fortunate enough to have the support of AHRC funding for my MA at Aberystwyth University, thus, in order to express my gratitude for my nomination for this valuable grant I chose to undertake a project for my dissertation that would exhibit a small fraction of the excellent resources available to literary students at Aberystwyth through the National Library of Wales.

Introduction

Often in medieval manuscript compilations there appears to be little compositional logic; texts by different authors, on different subjects, of different genres, and even, from different literary periods seem to be cobbled together without rhyme or reason. In certain cases, and perhaps more often than not, shear practicality and expediency meant that it was sensible to house all texts together miscellaneously, lest they become damaged or lost, as Ralph Hanna has noted:

> Even books that are not miscellanies should be understood
> as a part of a miscellaneous medieval manuscript culture
> that always values the local more than the general.[1]

John Scahill concurs and embraces the term miscellany for a broad array of medieval manuscript compilations, arguing that connectivity infuses miscellanies:

> A miscellany has cohesion of some kind, which may either
> be external - directed towards some function – or internal,
> in which the relationship of texts with each other and the
> sharing of the whole are factors.[2]

My approach to the National Library of Wales' fifteenth century Peniarth MS 481D conforms to Scahill's attitude towards compilations in so far as I assert that there is an internal praxis that abstractly binds Peniarth MS 481D's texts together. Unlike Scahill, however, I refrain from referring to Peniarth MS 481D as a miscellany because the term tends to be interpreted as meaning a, 'somewhat arbitrary, casual

[1] Ralph Hanna, 'Middle English Manuscripts and the Study of Literature', *New Medieval Literature* A (2001), 243-64.
[2] John Scahill, 'Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Language and Literature', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33.1 (2003), 18-32.

collection of texts',[3] as opposed to a choice selection of texts with complementary themes, concerns, and literary aims.

There are two main interrelated contentions that shape my approach and discussion of Peniarth MS 481D. The first is that the manuscript and its texts conform to ideas about the reading habits and interests of the fifteenth century gentry - the texts' linguistic markers, the manuscript book's lavish illustrations, and the matter and materials covered in the texts convey a sense of the social caché sought by and crafted for gentry tastes and sensibilities.[4] The second core assertion is that the appeal of the compilation for a fifteenth century gentry audience lay in its potential utility as a pedagogical tool to aid the study of Latin grammar and Latinate literary and socio-cultural heritage; the study of Latin and Christianized classical precepts is presented within and between the texts as a means of enhancing a reader's socio-economic agility and upward mobility in England's late medieval trilingual society.[5] In order to justify my interpretation of Peniarth MS 481D as a compilation meant for a gentry audience I have included sections at the close of this introduction and in the conclusion that discuss wider gentry issues. These issues in turn inform the three central chapters on the three texts in the manuscript: the *Disticha Catonis*, the *Historia de preliis*, and the *Historia Trium Regum*.

To give an impression of the variety of discourses and themes presented in each of Peniarth MS 481D I have chosen to emphasise pertinent subjects in each chapter. My first chapter on the paraphrased *Disticha Catonis* by Benedict Burgh

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[3] Theo Stremmler, 'Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts: MS Harley 2253, for Example', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of BL Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), p. 113.
[4] Phillipa Maddern, 'Gentry', in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 18; John Gillingham, 2002, pp. 267-70.
[5] Scahill, p. 18.

focuses on the role of language and literacy as social devices. I build on research into the distich's reputation as a text traditionally used as a Latin grammar and examine the advice of Burgh's Christianised paraphrase as a possible influence on the development and evolution of literature on manners. Chapters two and three relate back to the *Disticha Catonis*, demonstrating how these texts may have been intended to illustrate and animate the concepts introduced in the Catonian lessons. I suggest that the texts that follow the distichs further the educational value of the compilation by asserting that the *Historia de preliis* and the *Historia Trium Regum* were arranged in order of their Latin and literary difficulty. These latter texts present the reader with increasingly challenging materials on which to practice their Latin, for, to cite Scahill, 'language can be a factor not only in the choice of texts, but also in their organization, producing contrasts, connections and groupings'.[6]

Beyond the linguistic ties that bind the book together, chapters two and three look specifically at typological issues that create a sense of thematic connectivity in the manuscript. To demonstrate the thematic crossovers in the compilation my analysis of all three texts looks both backwards and forwards to the other works in the compilation. This is especially so in the case of the *Historia de preliis,* which I suggest anticipates narrative elements in the *Historia Trium Regum* - just as the ideologies in the *Historia Trium Regum* accommodate pagan prophesy and classical culture in its polemic. This reflexive style of analysis mirrors the material evidence of the manuscript book's use. For, on examination of the manuscript I found that the folios are worn and marked in a manner that would suggest that the texts were read selectively, and not necessarily in chronological order. Thus, by reflecting on the texts' thematic and didactic impetuses, and by marking contrasts and correspondences

[6] Scahill, pp. 18-19.

between the texts, my analysis echoes my interpretation of the texts' material 'signatures of usage',[7] which convey clues about how the compilation was used.

A further manner in which I have approached Peniarth MS 481D's materiality is through its illustration. Due to the time and word constraints of this particular project, however, I have had to restrict my analysis of the imagery to that of one text only, the *Disticha Catonis*.[8] I hold that the *Disticha Catonis* is a useful example of the potential critical scope that analysis of texts' materialities can offer.[9] With reference to the pictures accompanying the *Disticha Catonis*, I do not argue that the pictures were specifically designed for this text[10] - though given the popularity of the distichs it is plausible that there was a set of images that were designed to accompany the precepts. I do assert, nonetheless, that the layout and use of these images feeds into the overall creative and polemical design of the text.

In terms of the manuscript book's literary apparatus I suggest in chapter one that illustration was used to mnemonically guide the reader as a part of Peniarth MS 481D's pedagogical progression. However, because illustration does not occur in all three texts I would suggest that by the time that the scholar had reached the level of Latin literacy required to grapple with the *Historia Trium Regum*, imagery was not essential to aid comprehension. Indeed, as I shall propose in chapter three, pictorial representation may have contradicted the *Historia Trium Regum*'s polemical design.

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[7] I use this term to refer to marks and signs of ware and tare on the texts within Peniarth MS 481D.

[8] A future study might investigate the illustrated history of Peniarth MS 481D.

[9] Roger Chartier, 'Communities of Readers', in *The Order of Books: readers, authors, and libraries in Europe between the 14th and 18th centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 3.

[10] Leslie Lawton suggests that, 'stock motifs involving undifferentiated figures and simple gestures … could be recombined at will in medieval manuscripts', in 'The Illustration of late medieval secular texts with special reference to Lydgate's *Troy-Book*', in *Manuscripts and Readers in fifteenth century England: the literary implications of manuscript study*, ed. by D. Pearsall (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983), p. 45.

Whilst illustration does not feature throughout Peniarth MS 481D's texts, historicity does. Historical *auctoritas* and the 'voices' of history in their various articulations are re-cast and reoriented across all three texts in order to serve each oeuvre's particular polemic. Ultimately this use of history becomes an impetus to the development of a novel ideological blend that is specific to Peniarth MS 481D, giving a sense of the original owners'/compilers' ideological tastes and values. The individual texts' histories are de-temporialized, and thence, commoditised, claimed, and used by the present in the construction of the manuscript compilation - a literary strategy that was well-established during the medieval period:

> …out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere.[11]

Chaucer highlights the contiguous relationship between materiality and ideology; out of old books, new 'science' is learnt. It is not the material in the books that has changed, rather, the interpretation and use of the material that has evolved. [12]

It is my contention that Janus-faced, Peniarth MS 481D, and the versions of texts therein, hark back to the medieval past - its didactic and practical use of Latin and classical literature for the continued conveyance of Church dogma, ideology, ritual, and tradition - and, at the same time, look forward to the development of Neo-platonic socio-cultural interests that are now seen as characteristic of the Early

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[11] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), lines 22-5. I am grateful to A. J. Minnis for his use of this quotation in his, 'Academic Prologues to 'Auctores'', in *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), p. 9.

[12] D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, The Panizzi Lectures, 1985 (London: The British Library, 1986), p. 20.

Modern period. Thus, I propose that Peniarth MS 481D is a useful example of a collection of texts that illustrate certain ideological trajectories that characterised the fifteenth century.[13]

Critical perspective

My approach to Peniarth MS 481D has developed out of elements of criticism in anthropology and literary historicism as an interdisciplinary means of dealing with certain epistemological problems that face the contemporary reader in what Louis Montrose famously identified as the pervasive critical impediment: the, 'textuality of history, [and] the historicity of texts'.[14] Taking the Saussarian premise that there exists a deep rooted 'langue' that pervades human cultures across time, enabling the critic to find meaning outside of their specific 'parole', I apply the idea that languages' universal qualities are borne out of their function and characteristics as, 'systems of codification' derived from, 'pre-existing rules and procedures'.[15] Thus, this study looks diachronically at how the texts' histories reveal signs that informed their utility when they were assembled in Peniarth MS 481D.

I assay to consider certain historical and social factors that may have acted on the way that Peniarth MS 481D was read, whilst also attending to my own interpretation of the manuscript's internal discourses, its intertextual trajectories, materiality, and physical attributes, which continue to shape its artistic value as a

[13] D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, The Panizzi Lectures, 1985 (London: The British Library, 1986), p. 20.
[14] Louis Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeser (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 20.
[15] John E. Toews, 'Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience', *American Historical Review* 92 (1987), p. 882; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.167.

'monstration' of its initial presentation - since time and socio-cultural changes reconstitute the original work. [16] Thus, my aim is to provide a reflexive critical analysis of the manuscript by enabling the book to disclose its critical hermeneutics on its own terms, bringing to the fore 'the presence [of the texts'] as historical agents';[17] by deferring to the materiality and the textuality of Peniarth MS 481D and its texts I reference what Roger Chartier has called the, 'internalized intellectual schemata'[18] preserved in the book as an object of 'cultural creativity'.[19]

My investigation of the textual interconnectivity and the social orientation of the texts' polemics in Peniarth MS 481D is largely influenced by the critical ideas of theorists involved in work towards the development of literary theory for medieval literature, such as Alastair Minnis, A. B. Scott, and Rita Copeland. I am also indebted to the work of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evens in their study, *The Idea of The Vernacular* in which they assess the progressive development of literary and critical approaches in medieval England with careful consideration of wider geo-political and religious movements.[20] I assay to build on the work of developing an approach to medieval literary theory, using the Peniarth MS 481D to argue that through such a compilation one is able to piece together the critical

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[16] Paul Ricoeur, 'Arts, language, and hermeneutical aesthetics: Interview with Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), trans. by R. D. Sweeney, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 36.8 (2010), 938.
[17] Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 190.
[18] Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Cambridge, Oxford: Polity Press with Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 5.
[19] I borrow the term 'cultural creativity' from Elisabeth Salter, 'Reconstructing Perception and Experience 1: Evidence', in *Cultural Creativity in the Early English Renaissance* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-19.
[20] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evens, eds, 'The Notion of Vernacular Theory', in *The Idea of The Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory 1280-1520* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 314-30.

and cultural ideologies that informed the teaching of Latin and the literary approaches and ideas that Latinate texts held during the fifteenth century.

Original readers

I have suggested that this study looks into the cultural tastes of the fifteenth century gentry to inform my approach to the texts within the manuscript and the book itself. However, I am aware that there must be evidence to justify this approach. My research into the lives of John Cutts and Thomas Gawdy - the only identifiable owners of Peniarth MS 481D in its first two hundred years of its life - has revealed that these owners were members of the gentry during the Early Modern period.

Studies have demonstrated that during the late medieval and Early Modern periods the gentry used literature, literary materials, textuality, and literacy as a means of self-identification and exclusivity.[21] Peniarth MS 481D's exclusive prestige is inscribed in its opening. On one of the first folios John Cutts has made a dedication in affectionate verse:

> None are Happy till ye find
>
> Procede therefore as you begin
>
> Accept this Book of thy wel frende
>
> So to thy father I have bin,

[21] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, 'Education', and 'Civility, Sociability, and the Maintenance of Hegemony', in *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 243-75, 276-318; Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb, 'The education and training of gentry sons in early Modern England', *Social History* (forthcoming) <http://2.lse.ac.uk/economic History/pdf?Wallis/GentrySons.pdf.htm> [accessed 29 August 2011].

John Cutts.[22]

This could have been John Cutts' dedication to his son; it could also have been a dedication to the son of his friend. My preferred explanation is the former theory, since it is in keeping with the tradition of paternal advice imparted in Benedict Burgh's paraphrase:

> Therfor my leef chylde I shal techen the.
> Herken me wel the manner and the gyse
> How thi soule inward shal aqueyntid be
> With the wis good and vertu in al wyse.[23]

This explanation cannot be verified, however, two conclusions can be drawn: firstly that the book was an esteemed item, and secondly, that the compilation invoked ideas related to paternal guidance and the challenge to endeavour to progress. [24]

Ambition marks the inscription and is in accordance with the polemics of all thee texts in the manuscript, for each deals with or caters for social, cultural, or moral ambition in one sense or other. Poignantly, it would appear that ambition distinguished the second owner of the manuscript book also, for Thomas Gaudy, according to evidence of Reverend Charles Parkin, was something of a social climber.[25]

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[22] Peniarth MS 481D, (ff. iiv).
[23] *Disticha Catonis*, in Peniarth MS 481D (f. 1r). <http://www.llgc.org.uk/digitalmirror/pei/PEI00001/11/zoom.html?lng=cy> [accessed 29 May 2011]. Hereafter all references to the *Disticha Catonis* are taken from the digitized mirror hosted by the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.
[24] Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 33 (1983), 69-88; Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harrington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[25] Charles, Parkin, Rev., *An essay on the topography of the country of Norfolk: containing descriptions of the towns, villages, and hamlets with the foundations of monasteries, churches, chapels, charities, and other religious buildings*, ed. by Francis Bloomfield, (London: Dulmer and Co., 1809), pp. 115-16.

Parkin's evidence reveals that by the end of his life Gawdy had acquired or been gifted with no less that fifteen manorial estates in or around Norfolk. However, Gawdy - who qualified as a Judge of common pleas, eventually being made a Lord - was clearly a victim of the precariousness of societal influence in the Early Modern period; in the winter of 1589 Gawdy's estates and properties were seized, after which he was arrested and convicted in an inquisition and taken to Loddon on August 9th of the following year.[26] Gawdy is, therefore, an example of the vacillating social strata of the late medieval and Early Modern periods; as John Paston I attested, it mattered that a man was, 'countyd a jantylmanly man and a wurchepful', but the right to claim gentry status was socially, culturally, and politically contingent. [27] What follows is a brief discussion of the gentry in late medieval England in order to foreground my approach in the chapters that follow on the three texts in the manuscript, and also to demonstrate how this manuscript may have served the likes of John Cutts, Thomas Gawdy and their predecessors.

[26] Parkin, pp. 115-16.
[27] Maddern, pp. 26-27.

The Gentry

During the late medieval period use of the terms gentlemen and gentlewomen increased markedly and the need for people to assert their claims to this title of privilege corresponded accordingly.[28] Literature and literary culture became a means of asserting claims to superiority and legitimate rights to status as gentry, and paradoxically, a means of broadening the route to shaping one's appearance of genteelness. However, the disparate use of elite titles and the nature of genteel performativity left potential titleholders in precarious positions in regards to their social identities.

Phillipa Maddern, John Gillingham, and Nicholas Orme have pointed towards the growth in conduct literature during the fifteenth century as indicative of a fractured and fricative power struggle between those who believed that the gentry were a people born into and those who saw the gentry as a sector of society who looked to improve their feigned performance of gentility. Paying particular attention to the fifteenth century, Nicholas Orme has pointed to the detail paid to social manners in Latin *libri manuales* and grammar books that often featured Cato's advice. A handbook on table manners, *Stans Puer et Mensam* and a general guide to good behaviour, *Facetus*[29] were, according to Orme, commonly distributed to young scholars. Thus, we could conclude, from the subjects covered and the Latin character of these elementary texts, that they constituted instruction literature of an order designed to be linguistically differentiable from vernacular guides, and therefore more exclusive.

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[28] Maddern, pp. 267-70.
[29] Orme, p. 73.

Latin could have been used as a means of restricting the numbers eligible to be called gentry by asserting education and cultural literacy as markers of social status. Thus, 'Latinate' qualification was constructed around the conceit of ideas about tradition and heritage, as opposed to wealth and social mobility. Gentlepersons could master a discourse that, because of its classical heritage, rather than popular usage, was qualified as the 'authoritative discourse'[30] of an increasingly dominant and politically powerful class in late medieval society,[31] sorting the 'corn agen the shef',[32] so to speak, in the clamour for a gentrification.

[30] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 259-422; 342-43.
[31] C. Given-Wilson, 'The Gentry', in *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 69-84.
[32] Chaucer, 'The Legend of Good Women' *The Riverside Chaucer*, (2008), G. 74, p. 590.

Chapter One: The Disticha Catonis

The first text in Peniarth MS 481D is a copy of the beneficed clergyman Benedict Burgh's paraphrase of the *Disticha Catonis* (*c.* 1440-50) in rhyme royal (ff. 1-17), formally attributed to either Dionysius Cato or to Marcus Porcius. [33] The distichs prescribe moral and philosophical maxims[34] composed in the form of pithy instructions for the development of, 'moderate self-interest and stoicism'.[35] In this chapter I begin by outlining the medieval history of the *Disticha Catonis* - highlighting their potential uses and applications - in order to suggest ways of reading the text in its context within Peniarth MS 481D. I pay close attention to the polemic of the paraphrased version of the *Disticha Catonis*, discussing its pedagogical purpose, the gendered nature of the precepts and advice, the types of gentry audience that the text might have been intended for, the advice presented, and how this advice can be interpreted as the type of 'literature of etiquette' that evolved into the courtesy literature of the Renaissance period. I close with a discussion on the lessons in 'ways of reading' that the distichs implicitly encourage and which, I argue, are accommodated in, and applicable to, the texts that follow the *Disticha Catonis* in the manuscript.

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[33] Benedict Burgh was a beneficed clergyman from Essex who later became archdeacon of Colchester. Nicholas Orme, 'The literature of education', in *From Childhood to Chivalry: the education of the English kings and aristocracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 96.

[34] Suzanne Reynolds, 'Learning to read: the classics and the curriculum', in *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Classical Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 10.

[35] Barry Taylor, ed. and trans., *Alonso de Cartagena? Cathoniana Confectio: a Latin gloss on the Disticha Catonis and the Contemptum mundi* (Bristol: HIPLAM, 2004), p. xi; Reynolds, 1996, pp. 10-11.

The *Disticha Catonis* and the gentry

Traditionally the popularity of the *Disticha Catonis* sprung out of its role as, 'the grammar of pragmatic morality' in the programmes of medieval instruction on the *Ars minor*.[36] In her study of *libri manuales* (1924) Eva Matthews Sanford compiled a list of works containing the *Disticha Catonis* in handbooks meant for moral teaching and classical education dating from between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries. Matthews Sanford found no less than eighty-seven copies of the *Disticha Catonis* in *libri manuales* surviving from this period across Europe.[37] This gives one a sense of the popularity of these pedagogical handbooks, and, by virtue of the classical *auctores* behind many of the texts collated alongside the distichs, the esteem that classical literature was held in during for the Middle Ages.[38]

By the fifteenth century these precepts had been adapted into the ethical and doctrinal *desiderata* of Christianity,[39] making them ideal literature on morality and manners in a Christian context. There was no *terminus ante quem* for the *Disticha Catonis*, or for the *libri manuales* in which they featured; this type of compilation carried over to the print era and was adapted to accommodate absolute beginners in Latin with the aid of commentaries and paraphrases in the vernacular. This is where we come to the *Disticha Catonis* in Peniarth MS 481D.

Benedict Burgh's paraphrase of the *Disticha Catonis* articulates the shifting relationships between Latin literary culture, religiosity, the unstable nature of English

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[36] Reynolds, p. 10.
[37] Eva Matthews Sanford, ', 'Classical Latin Authors in the *Libri Manuales*', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 55 (1924), 190-248.198.
[38] Minnis, p. 13.
[39] Taylor, pp. 10-1.

society, and the state of languages in the ever-expanding educational arenas.[40] Furthermore, Burgh's distichs are unmistakably Christian in the theology that they disseminate:

> As ditees seyn therefore thou shalt unshytte
> Thyn hert to thy souvereyn lord and kynge
> Principally abouen alle other thynge
> Seruynge hym laude honour and reverence
> Which hath endowed the with excellence.[41]

It is to a singular god that praise for the subject's status and fortune is due, thus, we must assume that this is the Christian God. What is more, the ability to learn is described as given by, 'god [who is] inwardly the wytte / Of man', bringing men to 'understondynge'.[42] God, according to the distichs, affords men both social and intellectual capacities - a concept in-keeping with Aquinan philosophy on *liberum arbitrium* (free will and judgement) that reasoned that free will was a property of, 'the whole human being, not a component part of personhood'.[43]

For Aquinas, it was through the intellect that *electio* (choice) could be exercised, thus Burgh's emphasis on development of the intellect for moral and practical gains is couched in advice that alludes to Christian theology and ethics. Yet, there is a paradoxical self-conscious classicism about the work in so far as it defers to the more secular/pagan notion of intellectual development as an exercise for profit

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[40] Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning in Thirteenth Century England*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 66-79.
[41] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 2v). I am aware that certain elements of the rhyme scheme in the paraphrase breaks down, however, I have transcribed the distichs as they are copied in Peniarth MS 481D.
[42] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 2v).
[43] 'Thomas Aquinas', *The Information Philosopher* <http://www.informationphilosopher.com/soultion/philosophers/aquinas/.htm> [accessed 3 August 2011].

and self-interest, for example, by advising that the scholar should, 'Loue other men and haue hem so in chere / That to thiself thy loue may moste extende'.[44] This sense of *agape* love conflated with social ambition characterises the paraphrased distichs and, I believe, accounts for their popularity amongst the gentry - since the gentry were socially pre-disposed to guard and assert their own interests lest they move down the social scale. Nevertheless, whilst the distichs (and similar discourses) served those who sought upward mobility, the contradictions and ideological conflicts between the Christian and classical precepts interwoven into the paraphrase made them ripe for satirical comment. [45]

The paraphrased distichs were useful to the more innovative writers by virtue of their structure: the pithy rhymes could easily be decontextualized and re-framed alongside, either contradictory, or complementary ideas, thus augmenting the speciousness of the classical counsel in a Christian context. William Langland, for example, spoke through Piers, citing, not from the Psalter – the Christian route to understanding 'Do-Wel and Do-Bet, and Do-Best'[46] – but rather, recalling Cato's advice to '*Interpone tuis intedum gaudia curis*',[47] an altogether more epicurean and self-serving means of discovering goodness. The ploughman thus animates the intermingling of classical and Christian guidance in a layperson's intellect, and the *liber arbitrium* of the moral pilgrim.

Satire aside, by the advent of the printing era, the paraphrased versions of the *Disticha Catonis* had built up a reputation as some of the principle maxims for the

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[44] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 4r).
[45] Richard Hazelton, 'Chaucer and Cato', *Speculum* 35.3 (1960), 357-80.
[46] William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, eds and trans. by Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H. A. Shepherd (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), Passus XII, 26.
[47] 'Interpose some pleasures at times among your cares', *Piers Plowman*, Passus XII, 21-23; see also, Passus XI, 404-05.

upper echelons of society. This can be gleaned from the new introductions that were attached to printed copies. In Caxton's three printed editions of Burgh's paraphrase of the *Disticha Catonis* (1477-83), the introductions explain that Burgh's work was done, 'for the erudition of my lorde Bousher', the son and heir of Henry Bouchier, first earl of Essex.[48] Thus, the text was interpreted and marketed as material fit for the English aristocracy, especially since the paraphrased text carefully used Latin tradition to assert the authority and legitimacy of the vernacular as a medium for imparting classical wisdom.

The vernacular in Peniarth MS 481D's *Disticha Catonis* derives authority from the Latin owing to its position on the page: visually the English appears to evolve out of the Latin (see figs 1-5). The vernacular, in this instance, manipulates linguistic and ideological relations to redefine nationalistic ideologies away from geographical or historical borders that would otherwise constrain its cultural points of reference; it trades on bibliographical, literary, and philosophical spheres of influence associated with classical civilization and presents them as concurrent with English sensibilities thus accruing *auctoritas*. In brief, the Latin framed in Peniarth MS 481D could be interpreted as in homage to classicism through a performance and claim to genealogical and ideological descent.[49]

Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the 'authoritative discourse' fits well into the polemic of the classically associated *Disticha Catonis*. Bakhtin remarks that:

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[48] Douglas Gray, 'Burgh, Benedict (d. in of before 1483)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3990.htm> [accessed 31 May 2011].
[49] Scahill, pp.18-32.

> [t]he authoritative word is … the word of our fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a prior discourse.[50]

Thus, it could be argued that on this Bakhtinian principle, the *Disticha Catonis* in Peniarth MS 481D doubles the didactic agency of 'authoritative discourse'. For, the bi-lingual nature of Benedict Burgh's version of the distichs means that the Latin text is opened up and explicated for a wider audience. Rather than decreasing the cultural exclusivity of the text, the bi-lingual nature of the piece might mean that in certain social contexts, the cultural relevance, and thus, the contemporary authority of the text, in augmented. In brief, Benedict Burgh's distichs use of Latin convention to claim *auctoritas* combines with an innovative use of the vernacular - not as the language of the commoner, but rather as a language that descends from classical ideology - to assert authority in the present.

[50] Bakhtin, p. 342-43.

The performance of 'vertuous gouernaunce'

The polemic of the distichs and the illustrations that frame and intersect the, 'litel tretyse'[51] imply, by virtue of their masculine address and subjects, that the distichs were designed first and foremost to privilege male students at the upper end of the social scale. One of the first precepts advises:

> Beholde my maister this litel tretyse
> What it is ful of wytt and sapience
> Enforce you this mater to complyse
> Thynke it is translate at your reverence
> Enrole it therefore in your advertence
> Desireth to know what this caton mente.
> Whan ye it rede lete nat your hert be thense
> Doth as he saith with alle your hole entente.[52]

With humble deference the teacher entreats his master to take heed of the wise counsel that he will impart, implying that as a token of his esteem and 'reverence' for his social superior, the *Disticha Catonis* have been translated to ensure total comprehension of the sense of the advice. The personal address to a 'maister' does not necessarily mean that women were prevented from reading the text; it means, rather, that Benedict Burgh built on the gender orientation of the Catonian original for the distichs. However, if there were both male and female readers of the distichs, we can but assume that the experience of the text was quite different between the sexes.

The female audience is placed on the peripheries of the distichs, despite the homely subjects that the advice covers. Textually and imagistically the distichs' appeal is to men who aspire to confirm their rank and status in a patriarchal

[51] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 2r).
[52] *Disticha Catonis*, (ff. 2r-2v).

community, 'Of other men thou shalt thy myrour make / Conferme the to that that moste men appreue',[53] counsels Burgh. Towards the cultivation of a semblance of authority the chauvinistic advice that, 'The wyfys wordis make non auctorite'[54] erects an antiquated (and therefore authoritative) tenet to guide future fraternal, marital, and familial choices for the male reader; a fellow's word would always trump a wife's to a wise man. Burgh suggests that, 'if [the wife is] noysaint and full of greuaunce /…he is at ease that of suche one is qwyte'.[55]

Matters familial, educational, recreational, and issues that are best described as 'housekeeping' concern not only the pithy sayings but also the more universally accessible illustrations that accompany the text. These images distil the homosocial hermeneutic of Benedict Burgh's paraphrase. The pictures suggest the taming of nature and hint at displays of wealth and success that are both decorative and functional (see fig. 3). Thus, the male figure is represented as located firmly in the local and domestic arena; in the *Disticha Catonis* the home as the realm over which the head of the household should preside.

There are five illustrated tableaus in the *Disticha Catonis,* each one reflecting the domestic, masculine, and noble interests that both the Latin distichs and the English paraphrase teach. As the moral lessons develop, so too does the maturity of the pupil figure in the five illustrations. In three out of the five pictures the growing scholar is placed on the left hand side of the page but by the two final illustrations he has qualified to stand on the right side of the image. Furthermore, the narrative in the pictures moves to chart the development of the young nobleman's fortune, wisdom, and wealth as he progresses from the classroom to an outdoors scene.

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[53] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 17r).
[54] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 1v).
[55] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 17r).

A picture of a domestic room peopled, on the left hand of the page, by rows of seated young men heads the opening page of the *Disticha Catonis* (fig, 1).[56] To the front centre of the image a young scholar is seated slightly forward of his fellows, who all, like him, clutch open books. The young man appears to be taking instruction from an older man who we might suppose is the teacher. The teacher, in turn, sits in front of a seemingly superior man positioned to the right of the page who holds his hands open before him and is seated on a decorous seat, set upon a dais. This sage looking figure in lavish vestments appears to have an implausibly long neck and a statuesque visage, perhaps denoting his aged wisdom. Indeed, I am inclined to assume that this figure is meant to be an embodiment of classical wisdom - the wisdom imparted in the *Disticha Catonis*. An alternative theory is that the figure could be a representation of Dionysius Cato or Marcus Porcius Cato, if we are to believe that this image was designed for this text. Either way, I would suggest that this illustration clearly articulates the adumbration of classical tradition into Christian practice, even as it occurred outside of this text. For, according to Henry Chadwick's account of the role of Justin Martyr in the Early Church, Martyr 'began to wear the recognized costume of a teacher of philosophy' when he took up his ministry – later this attire became clerical robes. Thus we see in this illustration how the pictorial symbols of wisdom derived from classicism were incorporated into Christian typology and iconography for centuries after the Early Church set about colonizing classical culture. [57]

In the second picture the teacher and pupil are depicted as travelling from opposite ends of the economic scale: the teacher, on the right, stands on the path

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[56] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 1v).
[57] Henry Chadwick, 'Justin Martyr', in *The Early Church* (London: Penguin, 1967, 1990, 1993), p. 75.

leading back to a humble, rustic dwelling, whereas the young man's path leads to a sumptuous red-brick abode - the illustration appears to encourage the elite reader to see dignity in the lowly (fig. 2). The third image shows a working yard where two horses pull a plough out towards the surrounding countryside, past a vast (and obviously expensive) barn, while the student and his teacher stand by; the former holding his arms out as if to draw his teacher's attention to the industry being carried out in the yard (fig. 3). The fourth image moves back into the domestic sphere where the backdrop to the two men is in an airy reception room, or a parlour that is brightly lit (fig. 4). The teacher stands as if he is being received into the open arms of his student, now a grown man. The final illustration appears to summarise the scholar's achievement as a nobleman of a noble household and depicts the potential material reward that the student of Cato's distichs could look to enjoy (fig. 5). A princely manor house stands in the right-hand background while in the foreground the scholar and teacher are depicted standing within a formal garden, both figures gesticulating as if in conversation as equals.

The illustrative narrative that introduces and complements the text of the *Disticha Catonis*, whilst having significant relevance to the text's polemic, does not directly relate to any of the distichs or their paraphrases. Instead the pictures interrupt the text as summaries of the intellectual growth that the *Disticha Catonis* could offer young students who paid heed to them. Thus, in Peniarth MS 481D's version of Burgh's Catonian paraphrase there is an imagistic narrative that both contributes to the distichs' bibliographical, aesthetic, and practical utility, and at the same time, corrupts the classical precepts of the original Latin *Disticha Catonis*.

Both the illustrations and the vernacular gloss fundamentally alter the linguistic, visual, and hermeneutical qualities of the distichs and ultimately this

changes the reader's relationship with the tradition of Cato's writings. Furthermore, the punctuated form of the *Disticha Catonis* in Peniarth MS 481D suggests that the text was suitable for a type of 'browsing' reader: a reader who attended to short snippets of the text (or of the manuscript) as opposed to prolonged readings. This is corroborated by the evidence of Peniarth MS 481D's usage, for certain folios are more discoloured then others - especially worn are those with several short precepts to each folio. [58]

The assortment of discourses in the manuscript implies that the readers of the manuscript book could have been intended to be of both sexes, of various ages, with diverse literacy and intellectual abilities. Taking this into consideration I will now hone in on the potential 'ways of reading' that the distichs and the manuscript as a compilation propose. Here I speculate on the idea that the manuscript book may have been used in a similar fashion to a liturgical text or bible, in that the book may have been put on display, both as a sign of the owners' ideological beliefs and their cultural tastes, or, as a book to be used in the classroom (see Fig. 1).[59]

[58] Jennifer Richards and Fred Schurink, 'Introduction: The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010), 345-361. Eg. *Disticha Catonis* (ff. 12r-13r).
[59] Nicholas Orme, 'The Schoolroom', in *Medieval Schools: from Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 128-162; 152-53.

Telling by Showing: the book displayed

In Kathleen Scott's *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles* she notes that:

> Illustrated books were employed for reading or reciting and for what we now call 'display' (having books out and open is 'display' to use, but was an aspect of reading in the Middle Ages) under private or public circumstances, with some overlapping of the two functions.[60]

In view of the remarkably good condition of Peniarth MS 481D it is possible that the book was read as a display book, as opposed to being read cover to cover in the hands. If the book were read as a bibliographical display piece, as much as a literary collection, then one must revise how one approaches the individual texts in the manuscript. The contextual, cultural, social milieu, and textual qualities of the manuscript book should be taken into consideration; it is not enough to read the meanings, polemics, and shared or conflicting discourses between the texts.[61]

If the book was not used as a hand-held, practical tool then the texts could still have had a cultural agency as bibliographic signifiers. For, simply seeing texts open on display could constitute a performance of a text's cultural significance. The performance would be a bibliographical utterance that was laden with the cultural and social traditions affiliated and associated with the distichs. What is more, this performance could be read orally, silently, or even, experienced in a non-literary, passive way, as a familiar picture or sculpture might be. Hypothetically, therefore, the

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[60] Kathleen Scott, 'How Books were Used', in *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Later Gothic Manuscripts* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996), p. 31.

[61] Jessica Bentley, 'Modern and Medieval Books: A Review Essay', *Philological Quarterly*, 87. 1-2 (2008), 163-72.

Disticha Catonis as a part of a display book could have been passively observed simply as a generic symbol, its signified meaning would be its didactic, classical, and proverbial reputation. Such a generic, impersonal form of reading would truly fit into the Marxist idea of language as a system of codification derived from pre-existing rules and pre-determined procedures.[62] This would complement the pedagogical polemic of the text as both a work of literature and as an object in a gentry household.[63]

In view of the reputation of the *Disticha Catonis* it is interesting that this didactic, almost commonplace text should feature at the very beginning of the book. The position of this text in the context of the manuscript as a whole implies that Peniarth MS 481D was arranged as a progressive pedagogical aid and that there was an educational and didactic quality to the aesthetic of the entire manuscript book; the book was a reflection of the literary progression of a bibliophile, and possibly intended as an display object to convey a sense of the owners' cerebral discipline and perseverance.[64] Theoretically, by the end of their scholarly progression through the book, the latent message could be that the readers/owners of the book were competent *literati*. The owners could, in effect, be making a statement through the bibliographic textuality of the manuscript as a signifying object, not only that the household concurred with the moral, philosophical, and historical interests that it treated, it could also be a way of marking the particular type of education that the 'readers' had received.

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[62] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 167.
[63] On the history of the book see Alexandra Gillespie, ''The History of the Book', *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007), 245-86.
[64] Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, 'Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *Past and Present* 129 (1990), 30-78.

A further point that might indicate that the book was an object meant for 'display reading', would be the position of the lavishly illustrated text, the *Historia de preliis*, which occupies pride of place at the centre of the compilation. It makes practical sense that the most aesthetically interesting and legible text in the collection would be best displayed placed in the centre of the book, since the pages would fall with near equal weight on each side of the spine resting on a bookstand or display table. All visitors/readers to/in the house would be drawn in by the book's colourful Alexander illustrations exhibited prominently, inviting the literate and illiterate alike to peruse the book and absorb a sense of the household's values.[65]

The luxurious illustrations in the manuscript would have had value beyond acting as a storyboard for the illiterate. As a means of conveying the householder's gentry status and noble aspirations, the sumptuous illustrated text would be concurrent with Sir John Fortescue's counsel in *The Governance of England* (*c.* 1460-70), that a statesman (which is what a member of the gentry might look to emanate) who failed to invest in luxury exposed himself to criticism for a lack of noblesse, 'he lyved then not like his estate, but rather in miserie, and in more subgeccion than doth a private person'.[66]

Interestingly there is a tense contradiction in the differing ideological positions towards visual culture during the fifteenth century. For, whilst Fortescue's polemic for investment in the arts points towards the promotion of a programme of artistic investment by the elites, there were also anxieties about material extravagance:

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[65] Bentley highlights a critical consensus about the fact that cultural-historical inferences to be drawn from literary examinations of cultural artifacts, 2008, pp. 163-72.

[66] Sir John Fortescue, *Governance of England by John Fortescue*, ed. by C. Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), pp. 123-26.

> Whilst pictures were traditionally recognised as useful for drawing the faithful closer to God and to educate the illiterate, imagery for its own sake, as in the sumptuous decoration of books or buildings, was often regarded as a dangerous diversion.[67]

The incongruity of these two ideologies is played out in the conceptual margins between the texts and illustrations in Peniarth MS 481D. The lavish illustrations of the *Historia de preliis* sit uncomfortably with the restrained polemic of Benedict Burgh's paraphrased distichs, since the Catonian advice invokes the young genteel reader to put aside lavish displays of pomp, and to purchase only things within their means:

> That thou hast gete to thyn owen worship use
> What auayleth rychesse without honoure
> To spare good worship refuse
> That my garde chynche doth with payne and labor
> Is besy but I rede the nat to devoure
> Withoute reson thy good excessyfly
> For than muste thou begge of other hastily.[68]

The advice makes logical sense and highlights how stoic classicism served the political, economic, and social realities that characterised the late fourteenth century up through to the sixteenth century.[69] Furthermore, the fact that within Peniarth MS 481D we see discourses that somehow exist in a state of collaborative contradiction,

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[67] Thomas Tolley, 'Visual Culture', in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, 2005, pp. 167-68.
[68] *Disticha Catonis*, (ff. 18r-18v).
[69] A. Abram, *Social England in the Fifteenth Century: a study of the effects of economic conditions* (London: Routledge, 1909).

reminds us that much of what informed the Renaissance in England was a dialogical evolution of traditions and discourses that ran throughout the medieval period - the emphasis changed but the discourses were taken from the historiographies that we find in manuscripts such as Peniarth MS 481D, the texts exist as, ‘ relational event[s]’.[70]

[70] Harold Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 106.

Chapter Two: Historia de preliis

My reading of the *Historia de preliis* (the Battles of Alexander the Great) in its context within Peniarth MS 481D is shaped by the idea that there is a pedagogical progression that develops through the manuscript book's texts. [71] In this chapter I argue that the *Historia de preliis* stylistically and linguistically provides a pedagogical step-up from the distichs, whilst affirming the same principles about manners and conduct. My second contention is that the Alexander text appears to anticipate principle themes that feature in the *Historia Trium Regum*, and also that the polemic of the text is such that, sandwiched between the Christianised Cato text and the religious historiography, the *Historia de preliis* is pitched to seem in accord with Christian ideals and symbolism despite its pagan protagonist. The overarching sense of this compilation, therefore, is that tropic, literary, and, ideological threads bind the manuscript book and its three texts together.

In the first phase of this chapter there is a strong emphasis on comparing and contrasting the maxims in the distichs with the narrative and the characterisation of Alexander in the *Historia de preliis*. I look carefully at Alexander's ethical principles, noting especially how, as in the *Disticha Catonis*, the precepts of charitableness and humility are calculated to promote moderate self-interest. My argument is that the potentially problematic egocentricity of Alexander for Christian readers may in fact be interpreted as his pragmatic and empirical approach to life. I suggest that these attitudinal qualities align with the Neo-platonic values ripening during the late

[71] I refer throughout this chapter to the *Historia de preliis* J1 recension of Archbishop Leo of Naples' translation of the Greek Pseudo-Callisthenes (δ) text. However, Pritchard has noted that in Peniarth MS 481D's texts there are varying degrees of influences from the J2 and J3 recensions. J2 and J3 are revisions of the J1 type - for brevity I refer to Peniarth MS 481D manuscript's *Historia de preliis* as a J1 recension, *The History of Alexander's Battles, Historia de preliis - The J1 Version*, ed. and trans. by R. Telfryn Pritchard, (Wetteren: Universa, 1992), p.7.

medieval period, thus illustrating how classical ideology - already popular during the medieval era - evolved through nuanced and socially determined influences, later informing the ideals and ideologies that we have come to associate with Early Modernists.[72]

In the second phase of this chapter I examine the *Historia de preliis* as a history that is sympathetic to the Christianisation of classical myth. To support this approach I make various references to, and analysis of, contrasts between classical and Christian symbolic tropes in both the *Historia de preliis* and the *Historia Trium Regum*. I argue that these shared tropes highlight how the representation of Alexander the Great's accomplishments affirm and corroborate Christian tenets and claims to classical authority. This leads me to assert that the way that intercultural ideologies are conveyed through the hermeneutics of history in the *Historia de preliis* demonstrates how historicity can be pedagogically useful in the present. I qualify this assertion by arguing that in order for history to be effective as a didactic tool, it must be mutable and capable of absorbing contemporary inferences; the history must reflect and appeal to the reader, and it must be produced in an intertextual context that validates any ideologically problematic or culturally incongruous elements. Peniarth MS 481D compilation is such a context.

[72] For an example of the interests of the Renaissance man see Elisabeth Salter, 'William Buckley', *Six Renaissance Men and Women: Innovation, Biography and Cultural Creativity in Tudor England, c. 1450-1560* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 130-153.

The value of historiography and historical lives

As a Latin text that is linguistically and grammatically more demanding than the preceding Latin headings given in the *Disticha Catonis,* the *Historia de preliis,* challenges the reader to advance his/her Latin reading skills, thus complying with Cato's precept that one must understand that which is read, and, for that matter, widely read, '…for he is to dispyse / That redith ay et wote not what it ment / Such reding is no thing but wynde mispent'.[73]

My analysis of the manuscript text has revealed that there was an element of selective reading of the story. I found that the folios that include several (of the numerous) epistolary sections show signs of heavy use - in a manuscript that is in very good condition overall. This may point towards the use of the text as an exemplar in lessons in written correspondence, thus denoting how literature was pragmatically used to enhance peoples' development in key literary skills. For, as Alison Truelove notes:

> The advantages of acquiring developed literacy skills grew throughout the late medieval period, as the gentry's involvement in local and national bureaucracy, as well as in commercial activities, increased.[74]

Given the historical subject of this text it appears that the pragmatic needs in the present were catered for by a text portraying a pragmatic figure from the past. Through Alexander's antique celebrity letter writing was promoted as an exemplary way to undertake formal contemporary interactions.

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[73] *Disticha Catonis,* Peniarth MS 481D (f.1v). Hereafter *Disticha Catonis.*
[74] Alison Truelove, 'Literacy', in Radulescu and Truelove, eds, p. 85.

The power of historical celebrity and the traditions that their lives and habits imparted were a means of imbibing experience, since lives could provide animated models of experience that could, according to the Realist principals of universals (*universals in rebus*), [75 unite mankind across space and time]. When the character in question could be associated with figures that had been absorbed into the scholastic tradition, as Aristotle (tutor to the young Alexander) had, the imaginative and polemical agency of the character was greatly intensified.[76] Thus, through characters, and their associated interpersonal and intercultural relations, historiographies could be made valuable for those in the here and now.

The relevance of the character of Alexander in the *Historia de preliis* to medieval, indeed, to Early Modern audiences lay, I believe, in the hero's characterisation which conforms to what Northrop Frye calls the 'high mimetic mode',[77] whereby a character is made simultaneously heroic and human. Alexander could be looked to as a heroic romance character through whom moral lessons could be learnt, for he is described as fully human and yet exceptional; his physicality is neither normal nor spectacular:

> fairly small [in] size [, Alexander…] had a long neck and sparkling eyes, and a distinguishing feature were the

[75] On 'The Medieval Problem of Universals' see Gyula Klima, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of* Philosophy, ed. by Edward N. Zelta (Sep 10 2000; rev. Mar 19 2008) <htttp://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2008/entries/universals-medieval/.html> [accessed 12 July 2011].

[76] The *Historia de preliis* includes a letter to Alexander from Aristotle who praises Alexander's explorations and his 'extraordinary and illustrious achievements'. *Historia de preliis*, III, 123, p. 117.

[77] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. by Robert D. Denham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 32.

> cheeks that blushed to confer grace. Yet the other limbs of
> his body were not without some majestic beauty.[78]

Despite this diminutive depiction, the King is also conversely portrayed as a master of superhuman feats of valour: '[h]e subjugated twenty-seven barbarian nations….He built twelve cities which are still inhabited'.[79] Indeed, there is more than a hint of the supernatural about this legendary figure, since he calls himself, 'son of the god Hammon and Queen Olympias'.[80] Thus, to summarise, as a romance hero in the high mimetic mode, Alexander appears, 'superior in degree to other men', set beyond both common man and the laws of nature, 'but not to his natural environment'[81] - a perfect icon of the classical age for the Neo-platonic mind.

[78] I have used Pritchard's edition for translations from Latin into English, *Historia de preliis*, III, 130, p. 123. This passage can be found in Peniarth MS 481D (f. 97v). Hereafter Pritchard's edition is cited followed by the relevant page in Peniarth MS 481D manuscript where applicable.
[79] *Historia de preliis*, III, 130, p. 123, (f. 97v).
[80] *Historia de preliis*, III, 84, p. 78, (f. 66v).
[81] Frye, p. 32.

A forward thinking leader

The appeal of Alexander in the late medieval and Early Modern periods encompassed far more than the militaristic ideal that he embodied through his subjugation of entire continents; the narrated exploits of the King speak very much to the intellectual yearning to explore, experiment, and exploit. [82] In Peniarth MS 481D, the inference is that these behaviours can be learnt; the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Historia de preliis* in particular emphasise the progressive relationship between experience, expertise, wealth, and status.

The character of Alexander puts the ideals of the Neo-platonic mind into action in his portrayal as a man spurred to conquer through a desire to learn, to convert, and to unify; a man whose curiosity about the natural world takes him on wonderfully innovative adventures.[83] Yet Alexander's ardent desire to conquer the natural and political regions of the earth is not a matter of cold calculation, rather, Alexander is presented as a highly socialised leader whose mode of conquest is described as both diplomatic and dignified.

By adhering to what have become regarded as markedly Christian principles Alexander achieves unmatched popularity amongst his colonised peoples. He tactically wins over, not only his own Macedonian army in times of strife, but also galvanises support from the peoples of the foreign lands that he seeks to conquer and colonise. As a foreigner, Alexander shows respect for opposing armies by honorably interring their dead, 'He also gave orders that the Indians killed in the battle should be

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[82] There are parallels in the popularity of *The Travels of Marco Polo* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* in the late medieval and Early Modern periods. 'Introduction', in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. and intro. by C. W. R. D. Moseley (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 9-42.

[83] For example, 'Alexander's Descent Into the Sea', *Historia de preliis*, III, 116 (f. 92r).

buried as well as his own men',[84] thus conforming to Christian criteria for ethical exemplars as a figure concerned with human dignity and principled charity.

Historiographically, there is a body of evidence that paints a highly ambiguous impression of the Macedonian conqueror. Valerimus Maximus (first century AD) noted alongside his praise for the ruler that Alexander had a rabid desire for glory, *iracundia*, and *superbia*.[85] In the *Historia de preliis*, however, the impression of Alexander is, by and large, positive. When measured up against the virtuous precepts in the *Disticha Catonis* the most notable indiscretions and failures that one could accuse Alexander of would be linked to his penchant for sensuous indulgences - his love of food and wine. Cato advised his son to, '[w]ithdrawe thin hand fede not thy throte to fat / Drink that suffiseth the & loke thou spare / To moche drink maketh men of wil ful bare'[86] - commonplace advice that Alexander seemingly took little heed of. Nevertheless, despite Alexander's corporal and social appetites, he was far from giddy; never allowing, 'dispeyre [his] wytte bereve [him]' Alexander's wrath was only ignited out of a desire to succeed and lead a successful army.[87] At Book II chapter 48, Alexander reacts in fury to his army's trepidation about crossing a massive river with a fierce current. By way of inspiring fearlessness we are told that Alexander, 'proceeded to go across first',[88] he thus demonstrably took active responsibility for the lives of his subordinates and for his own reputation.

Boldness in the face of adversity, according to the *Historia de preliis*, extends beyond physical danger and applies also to Alexander's capacity for reason and

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[84] *Historia de preliis*, III, 80, p. 76, (f. 64r).
[85] Valerimus Maximus, *Factorum et Dictorum memorabilia libri nouem*, in *The Latin Library.com*, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/valmax9.html#7.mil.rom.1.htm> [accessed 21 May 2011].
[86] *Disticha Catonis* (ff. 12v-13r).
[87] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 13v).
[88] *Historia de preliis*, II, 48, pp. 51-52, (f. 50v).

philosophy. Numerous letters detail Alexander's diplomatic qualities and his recourse to reason to achieve intellectual, as well as physical victories. In correspondences with the King of the Brahims (Book III, chapters 99-101) Alexander debases the faint-hearted philosophy behind the social and cultural habitude of the Brahim people, concluding that, 'according to my judgement, I say this about your way of life and customs: they pertain more to foolishness than wisdom.'[89] Alexander declares that the Macedonian people, as, 'rational beings with free choice' see the world around them, not as a threat but as, 'Many delightful things…offer[ed]…for our enjoyment: some to our eye, others to our ear, and yet others to our smell, touch or taste.'[90] There is a real sense that Alexander feels that he and his people are masters of the natural world, which makes perfect sense scientifically, since nothing can be proven otherwise and no rival forces had been able to match the Macedonians' fortitude.

As proof of this rational disposition, in Book III Alexander explains the science behind a tremendous storm that strikes fear in the heart of his army. He explains, 'this storm has occurred not because the gods were angry, but because the autumn equinox has taken place at this time'.[91] In the mode of a man of natural science Alexander uses empirical evidence to shape, not only his own beliefs, but also those of his subjects - details that no doubt appealed to the educated and elite Early Modern readers' humanist scientific interests.[92] Looking across Peniarth MS 481D, the *Disticha Catonis* also advises that there are often rational answers to ominous phenomena:

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[89] *Historia de preliis*, III, 100, p. 99, (f. 80v).
[90] *Historia de preliis*, III, 100, p. 98, (f. 80r).
[91] *Historia de preliis*, III, 97, p. 88, (f. 73r).
[92] The printed editions of 'The Battles of Alexander the Great', such as those from Cologne (Printer of Dictys) *c.* 1471, two Dutch editions (Utrecht? *c.* 1475), and editions from Strasbourg: 1486, 1498, and 1494 bare close similarities to the *Historia de preliis* in Peniarth MS 481D. See L. Hain, *Repertorium bibliographicum* 2 vols (Stuttgart – Tubingen, 1826-1838), pp. 778; 777; 777, 780, 783.

Drede them no dremys so seith deutronomy

Though they be caused of complexion

Or ellis of eny mysed fantasye.[93]

Thus, the appeal to reason is, in the Christianised paraphrase of Burgh, a capacity that is God given and commanded in Scripture and this divine disposition is reaffirmed, paradoxically, through the classical pagan character of Alexander in the *Historia de preliis*.

[93] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 14v).

Intertextual and intercultural authority: the personal and the public

The authority of the written word informs all three Peniarth MS 481D texts and intertextual re-orientations act as a mark of the accumulative authority of the writings' and the legends' fame and notoriety. This stylistic approach ultimately reconciles the texts' characters and the lessons with the medieval *status quo* by leaning on and forging links between the tropic threads across the narratives and epochs.

Some of the major sources for the *Historia de preliis* were Alexander's letters to Aristotle.[94] These are incorporated into the main body of the text and superficially afford information about Alexander's interest in the natural world.[95] However, on a polemical level, the epistolary interactions in the *Historia de preliis* highlight Alexander's affiliations with major intellects of the classical world and provide a sense of Alexander as a social being, and, because his correspondences are always didactic and are between eminent players on the geo-political and ideological scene, we are provided with yet another way in which ancient celebrity enhances the narrative's cultural and social kudos.

It is primarily in lessons in greatness, and secondly in performances of nobility that it is most notable that the *Historia de preliis* is in hermeneutical dialogue with the *Disticha Catonis*, since both texts encourage the reader to acknowledge their membership of a larger community and to conduct themselves artfully - an issue of notable interest to fifteenth century audiences.[96] We see the noble wisdom of Alexander brought to bear in Book II when he seeks to avenge the murder of his one

[94] Pritchard, p. 3.
[95] See especially *Historia de preliis*, III, 116-117, pp. 115-16, (ff. 90r-92r).
[96] A. Abram, 'Development of National Character', in *Social England in the Fifteenth Century: a study of the effects of economic conditions* (London: Routledge, 1909), p. 197.

time enemy, Darius. Despite the victory that Darius' assassination grants Alexander, he laments the treachery at play, declaring that, ' "no supreme ruler should rejoice at another supreme ruler's sadness when good luck forsakes him" '.[97] Then, using duplicity to trick the assassins into a confession, he dispatches them to their executioners in an act of retribution.

Alexander's self-professed humility is polemically in accord with the Catonian reminder of the fickleness of fate in the face of prosperity. Burgh paraphrase Cato:

> Whan happith travers or to have ado
> With hym thow knowist nat egal to thy might
> Thyn utterest power shew not suche on to
> Leste that este sone he have the in lyke plight
> For it is seen in torment and in fight
> Fortune changeth ofte with in an houre
> And he is stomfilte that was erst victoure.[98]

The theme is repeated in the mouth of Alexander's fated foe; Darius' last mortal words impart a similarly stark reminder to Alexander. He inveighs against arrogance:

> "Alexander my son, do not allow your mind to be puffed
> up by vanity because of the victory now yours. Even if you
> can do what the gods have done and reach with your hands
> as far as heaven, nevertheless, you should always bear in
> your mind the end."[99]

[97] *Historia de preliis*, II, 72, p. 68, (f. 60r).
[98] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 11r).
[99] *Historia de preliis*, II, 73, p. 68.

The gravitas of Darius' advice is coloured by the threat of later defeats, but also by the threat of damnation and divine judgement when read in the light of the dominant philosophies in late medieval Europe.

A sense of one's mortality is conveyed through a discourse of property and economics and is performed through the social and familial relations described. Alexander's pre-emptive disclosure of his will,[100] confirms that, as a classical character, he lives according to the knowledge made explicit in Catonian writings that, 'whan thou goste hennys it [one's wealth] may not with the wende'.[101] Thus, it is in this certainty that Alexander confers his wealth and status amongst his allies, making his wife, Roxane, 'mistress of all [his] property'[102] - just as, incidentally, the Early Modern, John Cutts, in accordance to late medieval convention, made his wife a principle benefactor in his will.[103] From this one could infer that familial pragmatics and bonds of affection could be 'leant' through deference to the hermeneutics of history in cultural apparatus, such as books, thus crafting a semblance of temporal transcendence for these customs. The success of these socio-cultural conventions would in turn determine the cycle of reference to the *auctoritas* of historicity, a fact that is brought to bear in Peniarth Ms 481D's texts' pervasive recourse to the authority of historical discourses to substantiate the advice imparted.[104]

Alexander's will brings me to the matter of marriage and the interpersonal power dynamics between the two sexes in the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Historia de preliis*. For, the contrast between these interactions and attitudes highlights how the

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[100] *Historia de preliis*, III, 127, pp. 120-21.
[101] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 16v).
[102] *Historia de preliis*, III, 127, p. 121, (f. 96r).
[103] *Last will and testament of Sir John Cutts, 20th June 1646*, Public Records Office: The National Archive, Cat. ref: prob/11/97, Image ref: 60, p. 4.
[104] S. J. Payling, 'Inheritance and Local Politics in the Later Middle Ages; the case of Ralph, Lord Cromwell and the Heriz Inheritance', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 30 (1986), 94-95.

different styles of writing affect the polemical possibilities of a text. By and large the *Historia de preliis*, by virtue of its prosaic style, enables a far more complex description of ideal marital relations when compared to the pithy and terse dictates of the distichs. Alexander directly contradicts the Catonian counsel not to take heed of women's advice, for he allows his astute wife to directly influence his final preparations before his death:

> Roxane led [Alexander] back to his bed and, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him repeatedly, she wept most bitterly and said to him, "If your end has come, first make arrangements about us."[105]

The King's will reflects his esteem for his, 'dear Roxane'.[106] However, the intertextual importance of these interpersonal episodes reaches beyond the *Historia de preliis* and could potentially account for the compositional logic of Peniarth MS 481D. Because the *Historia de preliis* illustrates and qualifies the maxims concisely set down in the *Disticha Catonis* it develops the moral and ethical syllabus that lurks within the Latin lesson; the *Historia de preliis* tempers the diametrical tone of the distichs by illustrating the socially and culturally determined difference between a shrewish woman of 'ire and impacience' and a woman whom a great warrior would deem, 'sweetest to [him] by far' and worthy of a share of his power, influence, and wealth.[107]

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[105] *Historia de preliis*, III, 127, p. 120, (f. 95v).
[106] *Historia de preliis*, III, 127, p. 120, (f. 95v).
[107] *Historia de preliis*, III, 127, p. 120, (f. 95v).

Christian congruities

The development of the intertextual and intercultural ideologies in the *Historia de preliis* as a chosen text for the pedagogical Peniarth MS 481D is best illustrated by the Christian symbolism, analogies, and intertextaul sources that inform the *Historia de preliis*' narrative. These elements combine with the classical subject, history, and geography to infer that there are shared histories and ideologies between paganism and Christianity. Just as visual space on a *mappa mundi* could be used as a typographical reflection of ideological chasms or congruencies, so too historical narratology could coalesce or cleave rifts that existed between various legends and myths pertaining to different peoples.[108]

What follows is a discussion of a selection of the Christian/Hebraic traditions and symbols that feature in the *Historia de preliis* and which, I propose, are intended to be interpreted as affirming the providential claims of Christianity in this manuscript collection. I hone in on key symbolic signs that ideologically bridge the generic, cultural, and temporal divides between the *Historia de preliis* and the *Historia Trium Regum* by looking at the final chapter of the Alexander text and the summary of his life that is gives.

There are contrasting versions of the details surrounding the life of Alexander, though there is general consensus that Alexander was born in 356 BC to Olympias and King Philip III of Macedon, whom Alexander succeeded to the throne from at age of about twenty.[109] Variations in details pertaining to the life of Alexander often have a polemical motive behind them and the details in Peniarth MS 481D's version of the

[108] Chadwick, p. 56.
[109] Pritchard, p. 187n.

Historia de preliis are, I suggest, intended to absorb the Alexander myth, its colonial legacy and fantastical polemic, into the Christian calendar.[110]

In Peniarth MS 481D's summary of the life of Alexander the date of his birth stands out as an important date in common with the Christian calendar. It is written that, '[Alexander] was born on the sixth of January and died on the fourth of April',[111] which is, as it was during the middle ages, the feast of the Epiphany. Other sources offer the twentieth of July as the birth date of the Macedonian king. Thus, this could be a case of how intercultural feasts and significant dates in the oral traditions that shaped later histories were aligned for authoritative and polemical import.[112]

Narrative consequences of the designation of the sixth of January as the birth date of Alexander the Great in the *Historia de preliis* opens the story up to a form of typological reading; Alexander could be interpreted typologically as harbinger of the unifying force of Jesus Christ, or, as an honorary 'wise man', a forerunner to the Magi who came to worship and adore the Christ child - as the feast of the Epiphany commemorated.[113] The second point of relevance, particular to the details' context within Peniarth MS 481D, is that the closing paragraph of the *Historia de preliis* records a point in time that is directly significant to the text that follows it, the *Historia Trium Regum*. Whilst the link is tenuous, especially given the fact that the latter text predates the Alexander narrative by several decades and was written in Cologne, it is nonetheless possible that the person charged with the compilation of the

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[110] W. W. Tarn, 'The So-called 'Vulgate' and its sources', *Alexander the Great; Sources and Studies, Vol. 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 1-5.
[111] *Historia de preliis*, (f. 97v).
[112] On the social utility of shared feast days see C. Holes, 'Arabian Gulf Hiyya biyya, Jewish Babylonian Farfisa, Christian Sicilian Sepolcri: popular customs with a common origin?', *Journal Semitic Sources* 49.2 (2004), 275-87.
[113] Richard K. Emmerson, '*Figura* and the Medieval Imagination', in *Typology and English Medieval Literature*, ed. by Hugh T. Keenan (New York: AMS Press, 1992), pp. 7-42.

texts in Peniarth MS 481D realised that the *Historia de preliis* would complement the Christian historiography of the Magi. For, the polemic of the pagan text was such that it presented a character in Alexander the Great who conformed to and was aligned with Christian sensibilities, as well as precepts and beliefs about status and divine favour.

There is certainly evidence in the *Historia de preliis* narrative that Alexander was devout, even if his religiosity was pagan, and such details enable the Christian reader to relate to the social, cultural, and religious life of the leader. At the close of chapter 28, after his arrival in, and speedy subjugation of Africa, it is recorded that, 'Alexander…entered the temple of Hammon and offered sacrifices there'.[114] Thus, immediately after his miraculous victory Alexander demonstrates a commitment to his religious obligations, thanking the gods for his conquest of the continent, and seeming to show aspects of humility that are, incidentally, in-keeping with Benedict Burgh's paraphrased Catonian instruction that, ' [he] who hath won they gods have in remembrance'.[115] A closer, perhaps more sceptical reading, might note the self-interest behind Alexander's oblations: chapter 24 records how Alexander, implored, 'the gods to give him true answers to all his questions'.[116] In a medieval context, however, the notion of making offerings as part of a spiritual transaction would not seem so out of step with Christian modes of religiosity. Indeed, the *Historia Trium Regum* concludes by introducing the audience of Peniarth MS 481D manuscript to precisely the type of shrine, in this case a reliquary at Cologne, where supplications and entreaties could be made through the saints to God. Taken overall therefore, Alexander's reference to the gods as agents who could help him achieve his will

[114] *Historia de preliis*, I, 23, p. 27, (f. 38r).
[115] *Disticha Catonis*, (f. 2r).
[116] *Historia de preliis*, I, 24, p. 27, (f. 38r).

would not have seemed out of place to late medieval Christian readers, especially if they sought to subsume the classical legend of Alexander into Christian historiography.

In the course of his Empire building campaign Alexander is described as showing the utmost deference to the peoples that he subjugates, especially so in the case of his encounter with the religious authorities at Jerusalem. Separating himself from his army, Alexander, 'went off alone towards the Jews…. [L]eaping down from his horse, he paid homage to the name of God and reverence to the high-priest.'[117] When questioned by one of his chief officers, Parmenion, as to why their king, 'revere[d] the high-priest of the Jews',[118] Alexander replies that, ' "It is not this man that I revered, but the god whose high-priest this man has been." '[119] Alexander, thus acts as a spiritual ambassador who mediates between the gods and the people in order to strive towards integration and unification - an ideal that was vital to the early Christians and that continued to shape the Church's attitude towards non-Christian nations and peoples' sovereignty well into and long after the medieval period.[120]

The source for the *Historia de preliis*' J1 account of Alexander's entry into Jerusalem (chapter 28) is an interpolation of Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.5,[121] therefore demonstrating the intertextual and, one might add, the inter-religious character of the text. Further to this, intercultural ideals that align Old Testament, classical, and Christian icons of virtue appear to emerge out of the intertextual make-up of the *Historia de preliis* in Peniarth MS 481D.[122] At chapter 85 a further example of the

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[117] *Historia de preliis*, I, 28, p. 30, (f. 39v).
[118] *Historia de preliis*, I, 28, p. 30, (f. 39v).
[119] *Historia de preliis*, I, 28, p. 30, (f. 39v).
[120] See Henry Chadwick, 'Expansion and Growth', in *The Early Church,* pp. 54-73.
[121] *Historia de preliis*, 'Notes', p. 134.
[122] For a further example of the interpolation of Hebraic sources see chapter 28, 'Alexander's Visit to Jerusalem', in Pritchard, pp. 30-31.

cultural borrowings that shaped Peniarth MS 481D's *Historia de preliis*' characterisation of Alexander emerges. Here the text follows the *Letter to Aristotle*, describing Zephir's generous act of giving to Alexander the only water that could be found in an arid region of India. Alexander's response to this magnanimity was to make his own act of self-sacrifice: Alexander poured the water away so that he might share in his army's discomfort. This scene appears to reach beyond a colonial, empire building polemic (speaking on national loyalties and acts of great leaders' indifference to hierarchical codes that bar them from understanding their people) - it tends towards a representation of a cross-cultural trope that colours idealised rulers, for the action is reminiscent of David's generosity at the Bethlehem well (1 Chronicles 12. 17-19). Thus, the *Historia de preliis* provides a romance history that treats classical civilization as a forerunner of late medieval Christian sensibilities and their interpretations of Old Testament legends.

History and its utility

The fact that in the *Historia de preliis* we have an example of a proto-humanist in Alexander, created out of the intertextual organisation of classical sources and impressions, points towards the mutability of history as an ideological arena. The historical consciousness – *geschichtsbewusstein* - of the *Historia de preliis* constitutes a generic perspective that links the present and the past through a teleological representation of history. Thus, the borders between the chronological-generic and exemplary representations in the narrative form a discursive space out of which didactic, and seemingly a-temporal lessons can be imparted. This trope characterised historiographical narratives during the high Middle Ages, as Hans-Werner Gortz has noted: the tradition of diachronical narratives, where events were found in order of their chronological sequence, was contradicted by typological considerations, such as Christianised themes.[123] Werner Gottz summaries that these themes were used to circumnavigate the constraints of conflicting or superfluous source materials so that a timelessness could, 'pervade certain historiographical polemics'.[124] I would add that these themes also aided the importation of the cultural values of 'the other', if and when these values could be used to affirm and assert the dominant ideologies and discourses.

Theoretically a close reading of the *Historia de preliis* and the texts that juxtapose it in Peniarth MS 481D reveal noteworthy insights into the literary adumbration of classical history and rhetoric for Christian ends. However, in the case of the *Historia de preliis* in Peniarth MS 481D, signs of the text's use and handling

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[123] Hans-Werner Gortz, 'The Concept of Time in the Historiography of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', in *Medieval Concepts of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 157.
[124] Hans-Werner Gortz, p. 157.

are limited. This therefore tells us the historiographical narrative derived from Archbishop Leo was read, and therefore interpreted, in a highly erratic and random manner, one might even call the approach indifferent.

The effect of the idea of random and selective reading of the *Historia de preliis*, [125] indeed, of any of the texts in the manuscript, leads me to conclude that, whilst this text may have had a wider reputation as a classical historiography with Christian correspondences - a renown as a worthy narrative when read in its entirety - the specific interpretation of the text's historical value by the original (or early) readers of this manuscript, was of the particular pedagogical, rhetorical, and grammatical lessons that counted as part of its literary tradition.[126] The historicity of the broader narrative was a secondary consideration to the practical potential of the text as a didactic piece. I would therefore conclude that, in the case of Peniarth MS 481D, the *Historia de preliis* and its historicity was a means of acquiring the skills necessary to cultivate literary proficiencies for the advancement of social influence in the present. As Michael Clanchy has soberly noted, 'lay literacy [during the medieval era] grew out of bureaucracy, rather than from any abstract desire for education or literature'.[127]

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[125] See Suzanne, 'From Phrase to Text: grammatical and rhetorical approaches again', in *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Classical Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 121-35.
[126] Heidi Brayman Hackel, addresses the disjointed ways that texts were read in R*eading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[127] Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.13.

Chapter Three: Historia Trium Regum

The third and earliest text in Peniarth MS 481 is a late fourteenth century Latin copy of a text by John of Hildesheim, written and illuminated in Cologne: the *Historia Trium Regum*. The story is not illustrated, although illuminated lettering introduces the chapter headings. An incomplete table of contents summarises the chapters (the first eleven chapter summaries are missing, probably accounting for one folio) and from this it is clear that the first two chapters are missing from the manuscript.[128] There is no indication that the pages were torn out or damaged once the entire manuscript was compiled. It therefore seems likely that the text was incomplete when it was bound together with the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Historia de preliis.*

The *Historia Trium Regum* in Peniarth MS 481D shows little sign of use, though, as with the two preceding texts in the compilation, certain folios appear to have been left exposed and are, therefore, slightly more discoloured to those adjacent to them. It is thus, despite the material evidence that points towards the history of the manuscript's usage as scanty and with little comprehensiveness (in a chronological sense), that I continue to assert that Peniarth MS 481D's texts have pedagogical qualities with an overarching ideological veil that binds the book together. For, I believe that whether or not the text was *used* as a teaching aid and with a consistent set of ideologies in mind, literary criticism of and between the texts indicates that at the point of binding there was a view that the texts shared polemical and topical congruencies, as well as didactic possibilities for gentry readers. In the case of the *Historia Trium Regum*, the more competent Latin reader is introduced to the genre of

[128] Chapter summaries: *Historia Trium Regum*, (ff. 99r – 100v); text: (ff. 101r – 167r).

religious historiography with the grammatical and interpretative difficulties posed by its exegetical digressiveness.[129]

In this final chapter I explore how the *Historia Trium Regum* challenges one-dimensional notions of medieval literary practices by pushing the boundaries between the social and religious corollaries of the historiography's polemic. Turning to the work of A. J. Minnis and his counterparts in the field of medieval literary theory I discuss the multidimensional agency of literary *auctoritas* to the medieval mind and the diverse symbols and anchors to which, and through which, *auctoritas* could be derived. Thus, I address the use of place and antiqueness as a means of authenticating the claims of Christian teleology.

I approach the *Historia Trium Regum* as a text that illustrates the changing social and religious ideologies during the Late Middle Ages, focusing on the attitudes to Judaism that are contrastingly documented in the *Historia Trium Regum* and the *Historia de preliis*. Finally, I suggest that this copy of Hildesheim's narrative could be read as a relic (as much as a historiographical text), since it borrows numerous tropes from the hagiographical tradition, and also, as the text's place of origin, Cologne, served as both a thoroughfare and a destination for pilgrimage. I assert, in summary, that the *Historia Trium Regum* may have functioned as a souvenir relic to commemorate or substitute a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Magi.

[129] Kevin Kileen, Chastising the Scorpion: Reading the Old Testament in Early Modern England' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010), 491-506.

The narrative and the place

Place is of vital importance to the internal and external polemic of the *Historia Trium Regum.* For, John of Hildesheim uses 'reoriented place identity'[130] to represent the revealed Christian truth that he discerns in his numerous sources' situational signposts. These place names become the axis that re-orient history towards his missionary polemic.

The *Historia Trium Regum* charts the legendary events that led up to the Three Kings' visit to the Christ child and begins with the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24: 17. It then treats the spread of the Christian mission and the good works that ensued. In the course of the opening section of the narrative the emphasis appears to be on locating the allegiances and locations of proto-Christians in the exotic regions of the past, thus linking the 'other' with the familiar, 'Also in the third India was the Kingdom of Tarce in which Jasper reigned at the time of our Lord's birth, and who offered our Lord myrrh'.[131] The third allusively anonymous kingdom becomes the provenance of a key player in the Nativity story. This ultimately infers that the other is absorbed into the Christian internal typography of the mind, thus substituting a secular or objective notion of location for a 'place identity' that serves the spiritual orientation of the historiography.

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[130] The place and its historical significance is equated and encapsulated in the place name, which has 'transpositional' mythological or legendary import. On 'transposition' see Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. by Margaret Waller, intro. by Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia University Press: New York, 1984), pp. 59-60.

[131] This is my paraphrased translation of Peniarth MS 481D's *Historia Trium Regum*, (f. 111v) based on Frank Schaer's diplomatic edition of *The Three Kings of Cologne edited from London, Lambeth Palace MS 491*, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2000). Hereafter I have used Schaer's edition to assist with my translations unless otherwise indicated.

Hildesheim makes a special feature of the events that led to the relics of the Magi coming to rest in Constantinople; he carefully details their movement to Milan by Eustorigum I (the Milanese bishop in 344) and then describes how the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa gave the relics to the Archbishop of Cologne, Rainald of Dassel in 1164. The description strives to create an impression of the providential intelligence that designed the journey of the relics. It also repeatedly defers to the prophesy of Balaam, who acts as a human link between the Old and New Testaments - a touchstone for the sagacious presentation of the events.[132] The denouement of the narrative and its focus on the city of Cologne - one of the most powerful centres for trade, and a magnate for wealth by the mid-twelfth century, accentuates the link between Cologne, as a prosperous trade hub and centre of worship,[133] and the relics as vestibules of sacred *puissance*. Thus, the inference is that the secular and the sacred can, by God's design, co-exist and prosper.

[132] *Historia Trium Regum*, (f. 104r).
[133] C. Horstmann, 'Introduction', in *The Three Kings of Cologne: an early English translation of the "Historia Trium Regum" by John of Hildesheim edited from the MSS., together with the Latin text*, Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse <http://qoud.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/3KCol/1:2?rgn=divl;view=fultext.html> [accessed 12 June 2011]; For detail on Hildesheim's sources see Sylvia Harris' article, 'The *Historia Trium Regum* and the Mediæval Legend of the Magi in Germany', *Medium Ævum*, 28 (1959), 23-30.

Christian historiography

Hildesheim's text ascribes to the late medieval hermeneutics of literary systasis, here amounting to the Christian bibliographic accretion of pre-Christian and pagan literature, a programme that was born out of the Western Church's desire to perceive some unifying principle that might further affirm and consolidate the superiority and righteousness of the Church. Justification for the juxtaposition and exploration of pagan writings with Christian theology and exegesis was founded in the revelatory words of St. Paul in Romans 15: 4, where it is written that:

> All that is written is written for our doctrine, that by the steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scripture we may have hope.

The hope of which St. Paul speaks becomes the fundamental substance that drives the protagonists of Hildesheim's narrative as the Magi aim their sights on the astronomical augurs of the Celestial wonder - which ultimately brings them and their shared hope together.

Hildesheim was not alone in amalgamating pagan and Christian sources in his historical chronicles, nor was he the most overt exponent of such a literary programme. A near contemporary, Ralph Higden (d. 1364) interpreted St. Paul's message as a sign that all writings (pagan and Christian) were designed and sent by God as part of his mystical revelation in *Polychronicon Ranulphi*, I, 18. However, Higden - with his concern to relate the early history of Britain to his excellent knowledge and interest in antiquity, coupled with his desire to maintain the support of his Benedictine order and Christian educated audience,[134] fell shy of calling all that

[134] John Taylor, 'Higden, Ranulf (d. 1364)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

was written in antiquity true in the Christian sense. Instead Higden concurred with Isidore of Saville: it was the responsibility of the Christian to bring Scriptural wisdom to antique literature, and it was for the Christian reader to peruse pagan and *unenlightened* (my emphasis) works with careful discrimination for the furthering of Christian doctrine.[135] This is played out in the *Historia Trium Regum* and the first chapter succinctly illustrates Hildesheim's own desire to fulfil unifying exegetical aims. The prologue notes:

> Thys matere of þe þree blesside kyngis toke bygynnyng of
> þe prophecie of Balaam, the prest of Madian, prophete: the
> which Balaam among [...] oþere þingis prophecied and
> sayde […] a starre shall springe of Iacob and a man shall
> rise vpon [...] and shall be lord of alle folk as it is
> conteynede fully in the olde testament.[136]

Hildesheim acknowledges the incongruity of various cultures' traditions relating to the prophet Balaam, initially seeming to make no judgement between the two cultures' beliefs:

> Of this Balaam is altercacyoun in þe Este bitwene þe Iewis
> and cristen men: ffor þe Iewis sayne in her bokes that
> Balaam was no prophete but an Enchauntoure & thoru
> wicche-crafte and þe deuellis craft he prophecied;
> wherfore in writing he schulde be cleped an enchauntour

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13225.html> [accessed 8 June 2011] (para. 2 of 9).

[135] Minnis, 1984, p. 205.

[136] John of Hildesheim, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, Cap. I, pp. 4-5. I have used Horstmann's diplomatic edition of *The Three Kings of Cologne* and I have edited the transcript for the purpose of clarity in these Middle English citations, <http://qoud.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/3KCol/1:2?rgn=divl;view=fultext.html >[accessed 10 July 2011]

> and no prophete. Agens þe Iewis cristen men sayn and allegen þat Balaam was a paynem and was þe first prophete þat was noo Iewe, & prophecied to hem þat were noo Iewes, & gloriously propheciede oþ þe Incarnacioun of oure lorde Ihesu crist and of the coming of these þree kingis.[137]

However, he very soon sets about in his campaign to prejudice against Hebrew sources for the historiography, in this instance using theology to discredit the Jewish story:

> [I]f [Balaam's] prophecie had come thoru the deuellis craft, þe deuyl wolde nat haue forbode hym to curse israel but god of grete loue schewed to balaam by a aungell þorwe tokenys, or þat he greuyd god by his euyl counseill… Also in her [the Jews] bokys is a questioun of Iob, whom god with his owne mowthe commendeþ: of whom þe Iewes ri3t no3t or litel take kepe of, siþe þat he was a paynym and na3t of þe hebrewes.[138]

Rather than trace the history of Christianity back through the Hebraic tradition, Hildesheim asserts the truth behind many pagan legends. In a period rife with anti-Semitism,[139] his bias is unsurprising, but in the context of Peniarth MS 481D it is very interesting. For, the two latter texts juxtapose historically contingent attitudes to Judaism: John of Hildesheim's *Historia Trium Regum* asserts the superiority of both

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[137] *The Three Kings of Cologne*, ed. by Horstmann, Cap. I, pp. 4-5.
[138] *The Three Kings of Cologne*, ed. by Horstmann, Cap. I, pp. 4-5.
[139] Elisa Narin Van Court, '*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Augustinian Historians: writing about Jews in fourteenth century England', *The Chaucer Review* 29.3 (1995), 227-48; p. 228.

pagan and Christian Scriptural interpretation to that of the Jews, whereas the *Historia de preliis* appears to take a far more conciliatory approach.

Two texts, two ideologies, and one history

Hildesheim's air of Christian exegetical supremacy was virulent during the fourteenth century, particularly after Nicholas of Lyra (*c.* 1270 – 1349) who, 'in writings calculated to contribute to increased hostility between the Jews [and Christians]',[140] called for the reinstatement of the *sensus literalis* in exegesis, thus turning aside the allegorical tradition of Scriptural interpretation descended from Gregory the Great. According to Gregory, the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem (Luke 19: 43-44) was analogous to the Christian soul under siege, and thus, the instruction laid down in the sacred literature of the Septuagint version of Psalms 59. 12, 'O slay them not, [the Jews] lest at any time they forget your law; scatter them in your might', meant that Jews were the guarantee found in Scripture that Christians would not lose their own beliefs, since they would be reminded from whence Christian lore had come.[141] However, after four important decrees placing heavy restrictions on Judeo-Christian interactions were passed by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) the Hebraic origins of Christian exegesis became increasingly contentious. By the time that Lyra was writing it was perhaps inevitable that the orientation of his emphasis in Scriptural interpretation should turn away from non-hegemonous ambiguity. Thus, under the

[140] Narin Van Court, p. 229.
[141] Ora Limor, 'Christians and Jews', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity IV: Christianity in Western Europe, c. 1100 – c. 1500*, eds Miri Rubin and Walter Simon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 137.

literal form of exegesis, Jesus' prophesy (*ex eventu*) in Luke 19 could be read as, 'historical testimony to Jewish apostasy and supersession'.[142]

In contrast to the policy of censorship and discrediting of Hebraic exegesis in the *Historia Trium Regum* (a fourteenth century text), the tenth century *Historia de preliis* is far more neutral. Indeed, the Christianization of Alexander falls into line with an exegetical tradition that was tolerant of its Jewish past. For, in Archbishop Leo's account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem (chapter 28) the Macedonian king is supremely reverent to the Jewish high priest, so much so that one of Alexander's chief officers queries Alexander's high regard for the Semite. Alexander corrects his officer: he did not revere the high priest; he honoured his god. The *Historia de preliis* records that Alexander recognised a vision of the Abrahamic god the in the Jewish high priest. Thus, this tenth century translation of the, 'Battles of Alexander the Great', testifies to the non-adversarial attitude of Leo and his source text towards Judaism. However, it is important to note that Archbishop Leo was acting as a scribe, not an *auctor,* and thus, was mediating his source without altering it (as far as we can tell). The third century Pseudo-Callisthenes source that Leo referred to was more than likely accurately recording the mutual respect between the Macedonians and the Jewish people.[143]

In the *Historia Trium Regum* the authority of the Jewish people over Old Testament prophecy is treated with contempt and portrayed as flawed and arrogant in its exclusivity. [144] John of Hildesheim paradoxically uses a discourse of understanding as a means of disaffirming Jewish spirituality and exegesis by presenting the Jewish

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[142] Narin Van Court, p. 229.
[143] H. I. Bell, 'Anti-Semitism in Alexandria', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 31 (1941), 1-18. Bell notes the importance of the cultural integration in Alexandria in the development of the doctrine of the Logos, which 'may have influenced Christian writers', p. 3.
[144] Limor, 2009, p. 135.

interpretation of prophetic writings or oral testimonies and then discrediting the Semites for their lack of faith in their own race's revelations. For Hildesheim, the Jews had less faith than those of no faith, i.e., the pagans:

> [J]ewes kepe riȝt nouȝt of þe prophecies of balaam ne of his words… but in her bokys sette hym at nouȝt--of wich hit were longe to telle and to declare.[145]

Hildesheim, the Christian historian, thus creates an air of detachment all the while that he emphasizes the shortcomings of Jewish history. Indeed, it becomes a part of the *Historia Trium Regum's* pedagogical prerogative to educate the young in Latin on the '*confusiones Iudeorum et hereticorum et omnium eorum opinionum et errorum*'.[146]

[145] *The Three Kings of Cologne*, ed. by Horstmann, Cap. I, p. 6.
[146] 'confusions of the Jews and heretics and their opinions', *Historia Trium Regum* (f. 160v).

Multifunctionality, fact, and fiction: generic borders and intended readers

There are several generic approaches through which one could read the *Historia Trium Regum*. It declares itself a history, and deserves critical attention as such. However, I would suggest that the text could also have served as a pseudo-relic and/or a devotional text. What is more, the tropic nature of the historiography makes it generically tend towards hagiography. In the following section I will explore the multilevel functionality of the story, the way that the text is empowered by its multigeneric status, and the historiographical/hagiographical tone of the text by addressing the mystical agency of the Magi that the narrative records. I will then move on to discuss the viability of approaching the text as a relic. From this position I will consider the text's importance, in the face of increasing anxieties about the excesses of mysticism, as a token of the persisting influence of affective religiosity in the fifteenth century. I will close by assessing the relevance of the story of the Three Kings to the owner(s) of the manuscript collection as members of the gentry.

The borders between the historiographical status of the *Historia Trium Regum* and its value as a hagiographical memento are frequently blurred, for the fusions between and/or across the sources' generic borders extend the significance of the narrative, imbuing the text with the power of the transtextually signified. [147] The text as a literary article could be interpreted as representational of the signified objects/people, such as the relics, places, and saints, for, the transcendence of meaning between, for example, the saint and the saint's life is dependent on the

[147] Gérard Genette, *Palimsects: literature in the second degree*, trans. by Channa New man and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

transtextuality that constitutes history. [148] Vincent Gillespie expresses a similar idea, calling this dynamic tropic device an 'accessus':

> an encoded way of presenting a text in a literary continuum of history, in the narrative continuum of an author's work, or in the ethical and hermeneutic continuum of the textual community of its original and medieval readers.[149]

The material text could become, in and of itself, a vestibule of authority via the symbolic continuum that pervades the relationship between language and matter, signifier and signified.[150]

The *Historia Trium Regum* - with its close association with the reliquary at Cologne and thus, Cologne as a place of pilgrimage – could be viewed as a 'mnemonic relic of place' if one applies the principles of transtextual signification. Furthermore, allowing for the transtextual agency of the text's use of 'place identity' one may choose to view the text's potential function as a form of mystical guidebook to the places of religious, providential (since the Three Kings were guided by ancient prophesies), and affective importance.

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[148] Peter Brown, 'The Invisible Companion' in *The Cult of Saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 50-68.

[149] Vincent Gillespie, 'The Study of Classical Authors: from the twelfth century to *c.* 1450', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. II, The Middle Ages*, eds Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 146.

[150] Cynthia Hahn, 'Configuring the Invisible: Depicting Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries', in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds Giselle die Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert (Turnholt: Utrecht Series in Medieval Literature 14, 2005), pp. 15-24.

The idea of the *Historia Trium Regum* as relic becomes even more potent and exciting when considered in light of the affective power of the story as a narrative that tells of three pilgrims - arguably the first pilgrims, for the reader can potentially become engaged in a shared commemorative journey that celebrates the written word as the link between the past and the present. What is more, in the course of the narrative the Three Kings' relics become associated with St Helena, a relic hunter[151] (amongst other saints), thus projecting the text's agency beyond its material boundaries towards its intertextual connections to other saints' lives and, in turn, their transformative power.

Eamon Duffy has noted how popular the Three Kings of Cologne were as spiritual guardians. They were:

> Frequently invoked as intercessor[s] and protector[s]. Their names often occur in incantatory prayers for deliverance from evil…Prayers to them were an invariable element in the small group of morning prayers in most Books of Hours.[152]

Thus, in an abstract way, the *Historia Trium Regum*, as the final text in a pedagogical book that instructs and enables the reader, is a text that confirms the empowering potential of Latin literacy, as the language of the Church and the medium between the saint and the worshipper. Futhermore, the Latin of the Church is given even greater authority via its association with classicism in its presentation in Peniarth MS 481D.

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[151] Margaret B. Freeman, *The Story of the Three Kings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), pp. 68b-70a.
[152] Eamon Duffy, ' "Lewed and Learned": The Laity and The Primers', in *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p.216.

Before moving on I would like to bring more out of Duffy's observation in light of the copy of the *Historia Trium Regum* in Peniarth MS 481D. The final few pages of the story of the Three Kings offer details of the Magi's particular strain of religious service:

> For these are the workmen […] which in the early morning, at prime, at terce, and at six and nine and the midday hour worked truly on the vines without grouching and therefore have received perpetual reward.[153]

The tone is regimented, it reads like a meditative text, such as Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Jesus Christ* and the narrative leads on to chart the specific oblations and tributes that the Magi performed at the given hours. It could therefore be argued that the text anticipated or catered for a reader who could contemplate the lives and service of the Three Kings and use them as role models and spiritual guides.

The contemplative quality of the *Historia Trium Regum* is enhanced by the fact that the text in the manuscript has no illustrations (especially when compared to the other Latin texts in Peniarth MS 481D), which could be interpreted as a mark of the intellectual 'typography of the mind' that the text was intended to inspire. Further to this, the universal linguistic heritage of Latin compounds the sense that the text used Latinity for its Scriptural and Theological associations; it infers that the text traded on the detemporialization that Latin as a medium could invoke, therefore accentuating the potency of the text in the present and for the future, as a relic of the past.

Hildesheim manipulated several apocryphal sources in order to heighten the symbolic potency of the *Historia Trium Regum* account, often mixing sources that

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[153] *Historia Trium Regum*, (f. 165v).

were otherwise in contradiction with one another. The number of kings, for example, is given by Hildesheim as three, in keeping with legend dating back to the second century. This, however, is at odds with John Chrysostum's (*c.*347-407), *Opus Imperfectum in Mattheum*, which told of twelve Eastern stargazers, contradicting Hildesheim. [154] As a historiographer, Hildesheim clearly made a decision to couch his discourse in rich and congruous symbolism - in a manner not dissimilar to the tropes used in hagiography. Thus, the number of kings being set at three accentuates the Trinitarian potency of the Magi, also bringing the number of kings into line with the number of gifts presented to the Christ child. [155] In terms of the didactic utility of this form of stylistics, the symbolic quality introduces the Latin scholar to the typological and mnemonic signposts that were commonplace in Latin religious narratives, and which are essential for studying and understanding biblical exegesis.[156]

[154] Schaer, pp. 21-22.
[155] Schaer, p. 21.
[156] Thomas Head, ed., 'The Cult of Relics', in *Medieval Hagiography: an anthology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 273-94.

The Medium of secular, spiritual, and social growth

The specific linguistic skills that Peniarth MS 481D caters for are important to note in the manuscript's fifteenth century context. [157] The fact that this compilation continues to present Latin as the elite, educational language - the language of social mobility and spiritual development - is evidence of the socio-cultural and linguistic battle-lines that characterized the rise of the vernacular in the late medieval polyglot society.[158]

The Latinate character of the story of the Three Kings marries with the idea of Latin as the language of religiosity during the late medieval period. Thus, the religious dimension, as well as the linguistic lessons behind the text, provides information about the convictions and ideologies of the original manuscript owner(s) or commissioners. The inclusion of the *Historia Trium Regum* alongside two secular texts, the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Historia de preliis*, implies that Latin was, amongst other things, taught in order to make the reader familiar with the language and hermeneutics of affective piety. Indeed, in the case of the function of Latin in Hildesheim's text, the language acts as a unifying medium that brings together not only European readers, but also seeks to expiate the divides between East and West.[159] This aspect complements the tenor of the *Historia de preliis*, a text that promotes the unifying success of the Macedonian ruler's conquests, thus appealing to the catholic principles of the Christian faith.

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[157] Nicholas Watson, 'The Politics of Middle English Writing', in Wogan-Browne, Watson, Taylor, and Evans, 1999, pp. 331-52; Elisabeth Salter and H. Wicker, eds, *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300-1500* (Turnholt: Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 17, 2010).

[158] Wogan-Browne, Watson, Taylor, and Evans, p. 3.

[159] Ardis Butterfield, ' "Gladly Wolde He Lerne And Gladly teche": Reading, Literacy and Education', in *A Companion to Chaucer and His Contemporaries: texts and contexts*, ed. by Laurel Antower and Jacqueline Vanhoutte (Ontario, New York, Plymouth, and Sydney: Broadview Press, 2009), pp. 303-43.

Interestingly the idea of Alexander the Great as a model of ideological readership is carried forward in the *Historia Trium Regum*. The Three Kings, according to Hildesheim:

> brought with them the richest and noblest jewels, and ornaments which Alexander left in India, Chaldea, and Persia.[160]

Thus, when the three kings bestow their gifts on the Savior they reunite vestiges of the magnificence of Alexander the Great; the luxury in the fourteenth century *Historia Trium Regum* is equated with the ancient authority, power, and magnificence of the Macedonian empire. What is more the inference is that the ability to bestow great wealth in respect, honour, and worship of the divine is a precept that is given historical precedence and this therefore legitimizes aspiration for great wealth (with the proviso that one's religious obligations are fulfilled). This notion was of great importance in a society with explosions in upward social and economic mobility and which used religion as the creed for civil and personal governance. For, in such a socio-religious context great wealth could be interpreted as a mark of divine favour and grace.

By linking the story of the Magi with the legendary ruler Alexander the Great John of Hildesheim buys into the tradition of Christian historiographies being, 'developed for the simple purpose of satisfying the demand to integrate the biblical history… into the ancient chronology'.[161] Hildesheim's historiographical piecing together of sources crafts a multilevel temporal trajectory for his polemic, for:

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[160] *Historia Trium Regum* (f. 119v).
[161] Gortz, 2002, p. 147.

> By informing present and future readers about the past… [historiography] links all three temporal levels through its representation and function.[162]

Temporal migration, however, is not the only implication of Hildesheim's historiographical style. The different themes, concerns, and generic tropes that are melded together in the course of the *Historia Trium Regum*'s historiographical narrative extend the text's connections to the other texts in Peniarth MS 481D, thus giving a sense of the intertextual threads that bind the book together. [163] Ultimately these two narrative devices enhance the utility of all three texts as didactic tools, for they firstly, ensure that the reader is able to engage with the text via shared discourses (such as those pertaining to religious symbol), secondly, create a sense of the texts' historical caché, and thirdly, infuse the pedagogical compilation with a timelessness that could extend manuscript's life and appeal as a didactic aid.

[162] Gortz, 2002, p. 141.
[163] Gortz, 2002, pp. 163-64.

‘Gentrice’ in Conclusion

> Now been ther generale signes of gentillesse, as
> escehwynge of vice and ribaudye and servage of synne, in
> a word, in wek, and contenaunce,
> And usynge vertu, curteisye, and clennesse, and to be
> liberal – that is to seyn, large by mesure, for thilke that
> passeth mesure is folie and synne.[164]

I return now to my overarching contention that Peniarth MS 481D was a compilation that was designed for, and at some stage owned, by members of the fifteenth century gentry by moving outside of the texts in the manuscript, to a text that contains a discourse that addresses head on the type of issues that I have argued informed Peniarth MS 481D’s compilation. Geoffrey Chaucer’s late fourteenth century, *The Parson’s Tale* demonstrates how the gentry were directly associated with specific virtues and vices and discusses one character in particular, Alexander the Great (a character in one of the texts in Peniarth MS 481D), as a figure closely linked to late medieval gentry ideals.

According to Chaucer’s Parson, it is the relationship between the outer manners of the man and the inner workings of his soul that mark him out as a gentleman; a gentleman’s gratitude for the kindness of others, and gentle authority over servants and subordinates are the markers of ‘gentrice’. [165] For, as the Parson recalls, Seneca preached that:

> “Ther is no thing moore covenable to a man of heigh estaat
> than debonairetee and pitee.

[164] Chaucer, *The Parson’s Tale*, 463-64.
[165] Chaucer, *The Parson’s Tale*, 465.

> And therefore thise flyes that men clepen bees, whan they
> maken hir kyng, they chesen oon that hath no prikke
> wherewith he may stynge".[166]

On matters concerned with the kindliness of the gentry, it is first to the classical *auctor* Seneca, rather than to any theologian (as has been the Parson's primary recourse up to this point)[167] that the cleric refers.[168] Just as the pattern of authority in the texts of Peniarth MS 481D is initially to classical history, and more specifically, to the classical *auctores*, such as Cato, so too this reference cites the wisdom of the classical tradition first, only then following it up with Scriptural or exegetical advice. Thus, the second *auctor* whom the Parson refers to is Saint Gregory whose counsel to those who would wish to prove their gentry status is that they must cultivate goodness without vanity by showing magnanimity, a principle inferred by the actions of the Magi in the *Historia Trium Regum*.[169]

The trappings of status are, for the Parson, deadly *cathenae* leading back to pride. He warns:

> somtyme the richnesse of a man ben cause of his deth;
> sometyme the delices of a man ben cause of the grievous
> maladye thurgh which ben the cause of he dyeth.[170]

Similarly in Benedict Burgh's paraphrase of Cato, much attention is given over to prescribing moderation and temperance in both expenditure and verbosity:

> …kepe thy tunge in mewe

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[166] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 466-67.
[167] For example, Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 321, 347, 348, 382.
[168] I have referred to a range of critical discussions on the nature and development of the fifteenth century gentry in my introductory chapter; this concluding chapter refers back to the critical material that informed the introduction.
[169] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 469.
[170] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 472.

> Of tunge untied mochil harme may falle
>
> And leue me wel this is as gospel trewe
>
> Who kan dalauyaunse of tunge eschewe.[171]

However, as the Parson makes clear, all is not lost for those who transgress, for those who are ignorant of the pitfalls before them may find salvation in knowing of, 'whennes Pride sourdeth and spryngeth / [and] which is the remedie agayns [it]'.[172] Thus, after delineating the ways of transgression from definitions by classical and theological *auctores* - as they are in the Catonian advice of Burgh - then the virtues that guard against a fall from grace are taught.

The Parson advocates humility as the principal virtue against pride:

> A vertue thurgh which a man hath verray knowleche of
> hymself, and holdeth of himself no pris ne deyntee, as in
> regard of his desertes, considerynge evere his freletee.[173]

He states that there are three manners of humility: humility in the heart, humility of the mouth, and lastly, acts of humility.[174] I would suggest that Burgh's paraphrase latently proposes these virtuous manners in his advice, and moreover, that the *Historia de preliis* and the *Historia Trium Regum* dramatize these same aspects of humility.

I have written of the generosity of Alexander towards his inferiors, even towards his enemies. Also worth noting is the humility illustrated in the *Historia*

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[171] *Disticha Catonis,* (f. 2v). This paraphrased precept is very similar to the style of advice that comes in the so-called 'Ever-Say Well' poems of the late medieval period. An example of this type of courtesy poem advising against loquaciousness can be found in the National Library of Wales' digitized Brogyntyn MS ii. I, 'Middle English Miscellany', <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=amiddleenglishmiscellanybro.html> [accessed 21 August 2011].
[172] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 474-74.
[173] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 476.
[174] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 477.

Trium Regum, for the Magi perfectly demonstrate acts of humility by putting aside their own aristocratic origins in the service of, 'hym that is hyer degree', the sovereign Lord.[175] The Three Kings are, thus, essentially choosing, 'the lowest place over al' by traveling thousands of miles to arrive at a humble stable.[176] As Larry Benson remarks in his summary on the place of the Parson's Tale in the *Canterbury Tales* collection:

> [The Parson's] review of the Seven Deadly Sins reminds us… of the many problems that concerned [the pilgrims] - such as gentilesse … [which] are resolved by orthodox Christian doctrine.[177]

It therefore seems a fitting conclusion to the manuscript book that the final text fulfils precisely this function; the *Historia Trium Regum* leads us to the fount of true *auctoritas*, God - the ultimate *auctor*, and its polemic, like that of Chaucer, corresponds to, and through, the 'inspired eclecticism'[178] of Boethian poetics, advising that:

> If you desire to see and understand
> In purity of mind the laws of God,
> Your sight must on the highest point of heaven rest
> Where through the lawful covenant of things
> The wandering stars perceive their ancient peace.[179]

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[175] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 482.
[176] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 481.
[177] Benson, 'Introduction', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 2008, p. 21.
[178] Boethius, 'Introduction', in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Radice, trans. and introduction by Victor Watts (London: Penguin, 1999), p. xxviii.
[179] My citation of Boethius is from the modernised translation by Victor Watts, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 110.

In the vein of humility and recourse to the Word of God, the final text is not illustrated, but simply given modest illumination to guide the reader to key stations in the literary pilgrimage that is the *Historia Trium Regum*. The understated presentation of John of Hildesheim's text alludes to the affective function that I have suggested that the text may have served, for the copy appears to eschewe, 'a likerousnesse in herte to have ethely thynges'.[180]

To conclude: Peniarth MS 481D is a collection of texts that directly attend to certain social concerns that affected a cross-section of society, but most notably the gentry. The texts deal with the moral and ethical mores associated with wealth and social power, whilst they also assay to reconcile social and cultural aspirations, such as Latin literacy, with religious obligations, i.e., pilgrimage, alms giving, and worshipful, as well as Godly, acts. Further to this, the texts are arranged in the contexts of Peniarth MS 481D to inform and validate the lives of the original owners, their tastes and interests.

History, and in particular the aesthetic and ideological appeal of the past appears to be a shared concern and narrative vehicle across all three of the texts: the paraphrase interrupting the *Disticha Catonis* harks back to classical culture and its *auctores*, similarly, the *Historia de preliis* and the *Historia Trium Regum* offer historical romance accounts of authoritative figures that shaped Western civilisation. However, as I have noted, there is a far more complex and sophisticated pedagogy related to historical narrative and temporality in Peniarth MS 481D's texts. For, whilst the *Historia de preliis* is represented in a detached, factual tone, leaving little room

[180] Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, 740.

for questioning the accuracy or consistency of and between sources[181] and trading on the cultural value of temporialization, in the *Historia Trium Regum* there is a complex symbiosis between the manipulation of historical sources to assert the legitimacy of Christianity in time, and the exegetical meanderings of prophecy to allude to the omniscience of the Christian Creator God outside of time. Hildesheim detemporializes his polemic to extend its hermeneutical potential using tropic strategies and symbolism, such as mnemonic 'place identity', which transtextually carry the suggestion that the *Historia Tirum Regum* could function as far more than a didactic linguistic exemplar for Peniarth MS 481D, it could also be read as a pseudo-relic.

In summary, however, there is a paradox about the way that history and time is used in the polemics of the three texts. For, whilst each text is united by a presentation of history and the past as a concept that is subordinate to the present (since it can be fully known and proven through historical records and is, therefore, seemingly unchanging), the actual way that history is approached and manipulated – whereby it serves shifting contemporary polemics and ideologies - undermines the notion of the permanency upon which the *auctoritas* of history is built. Thus, Peniarth MS 481D's texts are examples of literature that demonstrates how mind-dependent[182] late medieval literary uses of temporalization were - the mind was the precipice between the election of the spirit and the damnation of the soul, and the destiny of

[181] Scott Waugh, 'The Lives of Edward the Confessor and the meaning of History in the Middle Ages', in *The Medieval Chronicle III*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Amsterdam and New York: Rodolphi, 2004), p. 271.
[182] Charles Bambach, 'The Time of the Self and the Time of the Other', *History and Theory*, 50.2 (2011), 254-69; 256.

each life could be shaped by such things as conduct literature and 'moral' narratives imbued with historical *auctoritas*. [183]

If, as I have asserted, Peniarth MS 481D and its texts were used at some stage as a pedagogical aid, answering to the fifteenth century desire to attain social status through literacy, then the literary and linguistic development in the manuscript's texts is evidence of its didactic utility. By the final text in Peniarth MS 481D, the *Historia Trium Regum*, the reader is engaged in a far more sophisticated discourse than that introduced by the first text, the pithy *Disticha Catonis*. The final text ultimately demonstrates, above all else, the multiplicity of functions that textuality during the Late Middle Ages could perform. The collection of texts bound together in Peniarth MS 481D, and the confluence of religiosity and classicism therein, reminds one of the fluidity of interests and ideologies during the late medieval and Early Modern periods.[184] To summarise, Peniarth MS 481D demonstrates the complex ideological parameters of fifteenth century literary sensibilities and reminds the critic of the place of social ambition, the importance of history as a discourse of intellectual *auctoritas*, and the persisting appeal of affective religiosity in late medieval England.

[183] David Hoy, 'Introduction', in *The Time of Our Lives: A Critical History of Temporality* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2009), pp. xi-xxi.
[184] On the multiplicity of interpretations and uses of books and literature in Early Modern culture see Fred Schurink, 'Manuscript and Commonplace Books, Literature and Reading in Early Modern England, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010), 453-69.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Peniarth MS 481D *Disticha Catonis* (f. 1r).

Fig. 2. Peniarth MS 481D *Disticha Catonis* (f. 2r).

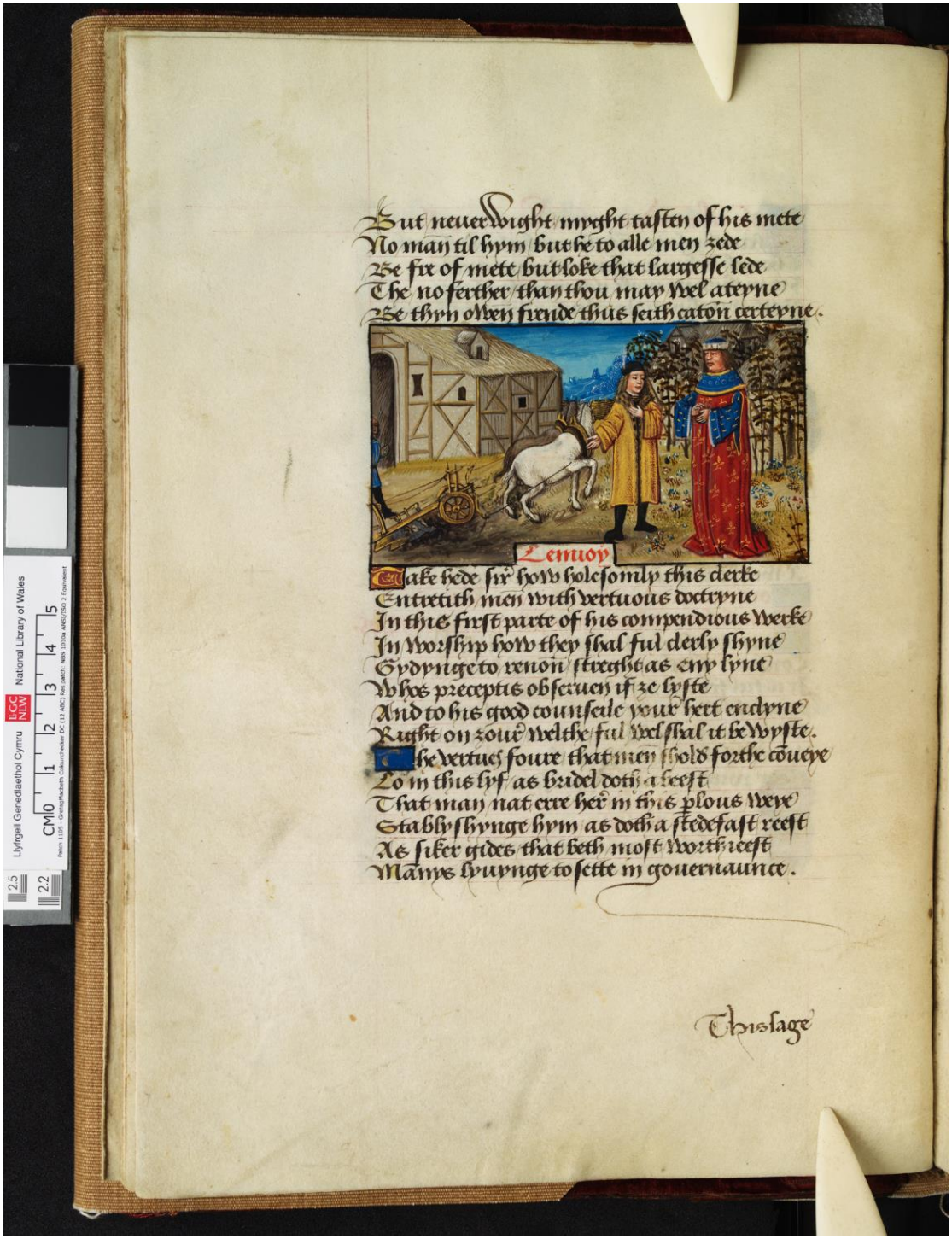

Fig. 3. Peniarth MS 481D *Disticha Catonis* (f. 8v).

Fig. 4. Peniarth MS 481D *Disticha Catonis* (f. 14r).

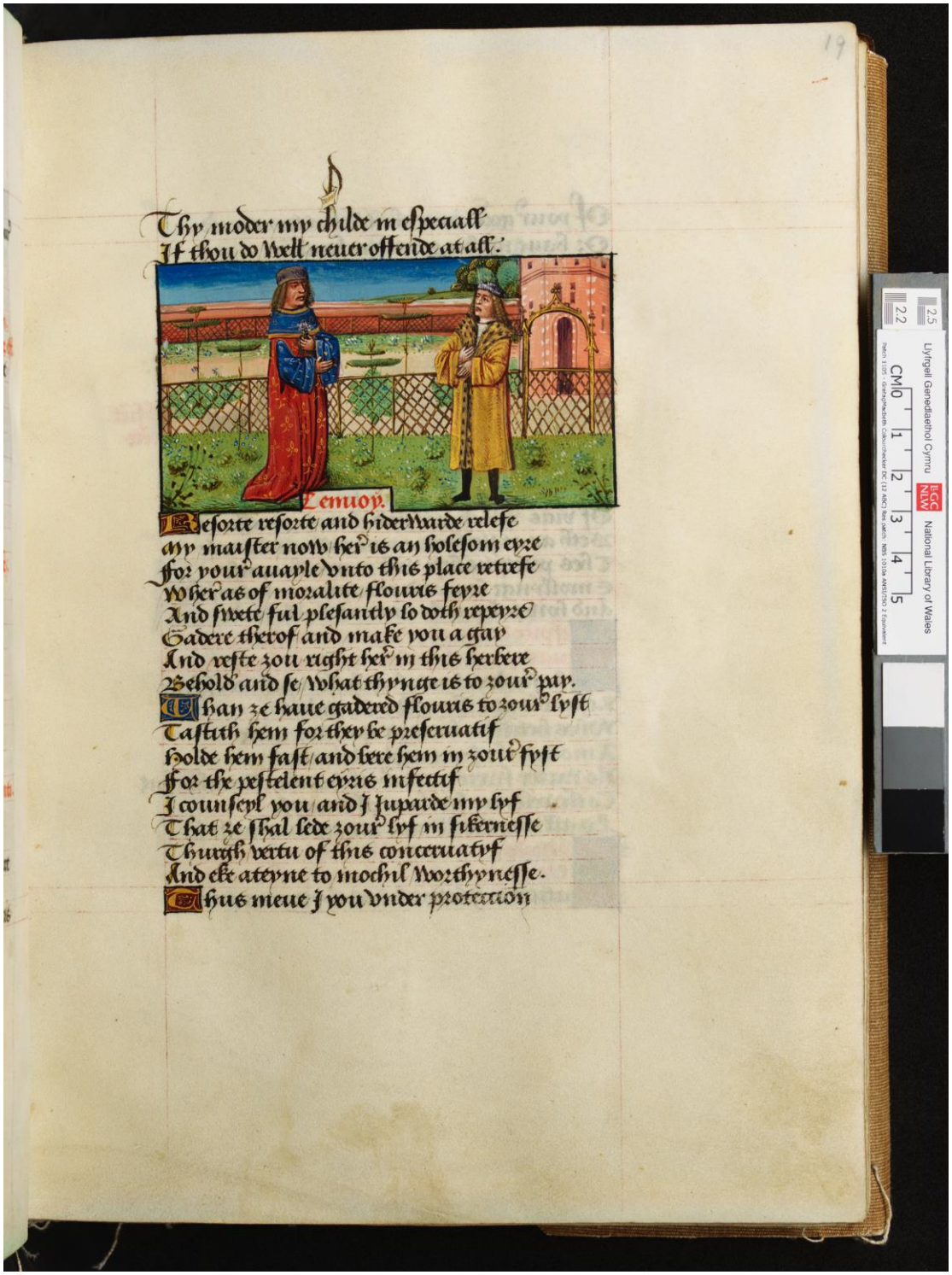

Fig. 5. Peniarth MS 481D *Disticha Catonis* (f. 19r).

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